AN

EXTRACT

Martha FROM A Fitzpatrick

PRACTICAL TREATISE

UPON

CHRISTIAN PERFECTION.

By WILLIAM LAW, *A. M.*

Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect. Phil. iii. 12.

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AN EXTRACT FROM A PRACTICAL TREATISE UPON Chriſtian Perfection.

The INTRODUCTION.

CHRISTIAN Perfection will perhaps ſeem to the common reader to imply ſome ſtate of life which every one need not aſpire after; that it is made up of ſuch ſtrictneſſes, retirements, and particularities of devotion, as are neither neceſſary, nor practicable by the generality of Chriſtians.

But I muſt anſwer for myſelf, that I know of only one common Chriſtianity, which is to be the common means of ſalvation to all men.

If the writers upon Chriſtian perfection have fancied to themſelves ſome peculiar degrees of piety, or extraordinary devotions which they call by that name, they have not done religion much ſervice, by making Chriſtian perfection to conſiſt in any thing, but the right performance of our neceſſary duties.

This is the perfection which this treatiſe endeavours to recommend; a perfection, that does not conſiſt in any ſingular ſtate or condition of life, or in any particular ſet of duties, but in the holy and religious conduct of our ſelves in every ſtate of life.

It calls no one to a *cloyſter*, but to a right and full performance of thoſe duties, which are neceſſary for all

Chriſtians, and common to all ſtates of life.

I call it *perfection*, for two reaſons; firſt, becauſe I hope it contains a full repreſentation of that holineſs, to which Chriſtianity calls all its members: ſecondly, that the *title* may invite the reader to peruſe it with the more diligence, as expecting to find not only a diſcourſe upon moral virtues, but a regular draught of thoſe tempers which are the perfect meaſure and ſtandard of Chriſtian piety.

Now as perfection is here plac'd in the right performance of our neceſſary duties, in the exerciſe of ſuch tempers as are equally neceſſary and equally practicable in all ſtates of life; as this is the higheſt degree of Chriſtian perfection, ſo it is to be obſerv'd, that it is alſo the loweſt degree of holineſs which the goſpel alloweth. So that tho' no order of men can pretend to go higher, yet none of us can have any ſecurity in reſting in any ſtate of piety that is lower.

And I hope this will be taken as a ſign that I have hit upon the true ſtate of Chriſtian perfection, if I ſhew it to be ſuch, as men in *cloyſters* and religious retirements cannot add more, and at the ſame time ſuch, as Chriſtians in all ſtates of the world muſt not be content with leſs.

For conſider, what can Chriſtian perfection be, but ſuch a right performance of all the duties of life, as is according to the laws of Chriſt? What can it be, but living in ſuch tempers, and acting with ſuch diſpoſitions as Chriſtianity requires? Now if this be perfection, who can exceed it? And yet what ſtate, or circumſtances of life, can allow any people to fall ſhort of it?

Let us take an inſtance in ſome one particular temper of Chriſtianity. Let it be the love of God; Chriſtians are to love God with *all their heart and all their ſtrength*. Now can any order of Chriſtians exceed in this temper? Or is there any order of Chriſtians who may be allowed to be defective in it?

And what is thus true of the love of God, is equally true of all other religious duties; and conſequently all thoſe tempers of heart, which conſtitute the perfection of Chriſtian piety, are tempers equally neceſſary for all Chriſtians.

As there is but one faith and one baptiſm, ſo there is but one piety and one perfection, that is common to all orders of Chriſtians.

It will perhaps be objected, that this ſuppoſes that all people may be equally good; which ſeems as impoſſible in the nature of things, as to ſuppoſe that all people may be equally wiſe.

To this it may be anſwer'd, that this is neither altogether true nor altogether falſe.

For, to inſtance in charity, it is true that all people may be equally charitable, if we underſtand by charity that habit of the mind which ſtands rightly diſpos'd to all acts of charity; in this ſenſe all people may be equally charitable. But if we take charity for almsgiving, or a liberal aſſiſtance of the poor; in this ſenſe it is falſe, that all people may be equally charitable.

Now as it is the habit of the mind, that conſtitutes the excellency of charity; ſo this is the charity to which Chriſtians are called, and in which they may all be equally perfect.

Again; are not all people oblig'd to be equally honeſt, juſt, and true and faithful? In theſe virtues all are to be eminent and exact in the ſame degree; there are no abatements to be made for any rank or order of people.

Now as to the external exerciſe of theſe duties, there may be great difference. One man may have great buſineſs in the world, and be honeſt and faithful in it all; another may have ſmall dealings, and be honeſt in them; but provided that there be in both of them the ſame juſtice and integrity of mind, they are equally honeſt, tho' their inſtances of honeſty, as to external acts of it, are as different as great things are different from ſmall.

But as it is the habit of the mind, which is the juſtice which religion requires; ſo in this reſpect all people may be equally juſt.

Now this may ſerve to ſhew us in what reſpect all people may be equally virtuous, and in what reſpect they cannot.

As to the external inſtances or acts of virtue, in theſe

they muſt differ according to the difference of their circumſtances and condition in the world; but as virtues are conſidered as habits of the mind, and principles of the heart, in this reſpect they may all be equally virtuous, and are all call'd to the ſame perfection.

A man cannot exerciſe the ſpirit of martyrdom, till he is brought to the ſtake; he cannot forgive his enemies, till they have done him wrong, till he ſuffers from them. He cannot bear poverty and diſtreſs, till they are brought upon him. All theſe acts of virtue depend upon outward cauſes; but yet he may have a piety and heroic ſpirit equal to theirs who have died for their religion. He may have that charity of mind which prays for its enemies; he may have that meekneſs and reſignation to the will of God, which diſpoſes people to bear poverty and diſtreſs with patience, and humble ſubmiſſion to the divine Providence.

So that they are only the external inſtances and acts of virtue, which depend upon outward cauſes and circumſtances of life; a man cannot give, till he has ſomething to give; but the inward piety of the heart and mind, which conſtitutes the ſtate of Chriſtian perfection, depends upon no outward circumſtances. A man need not want charity, becauſe he has no riches; nor be deſtitute of a forgiving ſpirit, becauſe he has no perſecutors to forgive.

Altho' therefore we neither are, nor can be all in the ſame circumſtances of life, yet we are to be all in the ſame ſpirit of religion; tho' we cannot be all equal in almſgiving, yet we are to be all alike in charity; tho' we are not all in the ſame ſtate of perſecution, yet we muſt be all in the ſame ſpirit that forgives and prays for its perſecutors; tho' we are not all in poverty and diſtreſs, yet we muſt all be full of that piety of heart which produces meekneſs, patience, and thankfulneſs, in diſtreſs and poverty.

From theſe conſiderations it is eaſy to apprehend, how perſons may differ in inſtances of goodneſs, and yet be equally good; for as the perfection of piety is the perfection of the heart, ſo the heart may have the ſame perfection in all ſtates and conditions of life. And

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this is that perfection which is common to all ſtates, and to which all orders of Chriſtians are equally called.

Again, there may be another difference of virtue founded in the different abilities of perſons; one may have a more enlighten'd mind than another, and ſo may ſee farther into his duty, and be able to practiſe it with greater exactneſs; but then as his goodneſs ſeems to conſiſt in this, that he is true and faithful to what he knows to be his duty; ſo if another is as true and faithful to that meaſure of light and knowledge which God has given him, he ſeems to be as good a man, as he that is true and faithful to a greater light.

We can hardly reconcile it with the divine Goodneſs, to give one man two talents, and another five, unleſs we ſuppoſe that he is as high in his maſter's favour who makes the right uſe of two, as he that makes the right uſe of five talents.

So that it ſtill holds good, that it is the perfection of the heart that makes the perfection of every ſtate of life.

It may perhaps be farther objected, that the different degrees of glory in another life ſuppoſe that good men, and ſuch as are accepted of God, do yet differ in their degrees of goodneſs in this life.

I grant that it does.

But then this is no proof, that all men are not called to the ſame goodneſs and the ſame perfection.

Perhaps it cannot be ſaid of the beſt of men that ever lived, that they perform'd their duty in ſuch perfection in all inſtances, as they might have done.

Now as it ſuits with the divine Mercy to admit men to happineſs, who have not been in every reſpect ſo perfect as they might have been, notwithſtanding that he gave them ſuch a rule of perfection; ſo it equally ſuits with the divine Mercy to admit men to different degrees of happineſs, on account of their different conduct, tho' he gave them all one common rule of perfection.

Did not God pardon frailties, the beſt of men could not be rewarded. But conſider now, does God's pardoning of infirmities in the beſt of men prove, that the

beſt of men were not called to any other perfection, than that to which they arrived? Does this prove, that God did not call them to be ſtrictly good, becauſe he receives them to mercy with ſome defects in goodneſs? No, moſt ſurely.

Yet this is as good an argument, as to ſay, that all men are not called to the ſame ſtate of goodneſs or perfection, becauſe they are admitted to different rewards in the other life.

For it is as right reaſoning to ſay, God rewards frail and imperfect men, therefore they were call'd to no higher perfection; as to ſay, that becauſe God rewards different degrees of goodneſs, therefore men are not call'd to one and the ſame goodneſs.

For as God could reward none, unleſs he would reward ſuch as had failings; ſo their difference in their failings may make them objects of his different mercy and rewards, though the rule from which they failed was common to them all.

It therefore plainly appears, that the different degrees of glory in another life, are no more a proof that God calls ſome perſons to different and lower ſtates of goodneſs than others, than his pardoning variety of ſinners is a proof that he allowed of thoſe kinds of ſin, and did not require men to avoid them. For it is full as good an argument to ſay, God pardons ſome ſinners, therefore he did not require them to avoid ſuch ſins; as to ſay, God rewards different degrees of goodneſs, therefore he did not call people to higher degrees of goodneſs.

So that the different degrees of glory in the world to come are no objection againſt this doctrine, that all Chriſtians are called to the ſame piety and perfection of heart.

Laſtly, It may be farther objected, that altho' the law of God calls all men to the ſame ſtate of perfection; yet if there are different degrees of glory given to different degrees of goodneſs, this ſhews that men may be ſaved, and happy, without aſpiring after all that perfection to which they were called.

It may be anſwer'd that this is a falſe concluſion: for though it may be true, that people will be admitted

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to happineſs, and different degrees of happineſs, though they have not *attained* to all that perfection to which they were called; yet it does not follow, that any people will be ſaved, who did not *endeavour* after that perfection. For ſurely it is a very different caſe, to *fall* ſhort of our perfection after our beſt endeavours, and to *ſtop* ſhort of it, by not endeavouring to arrive at it. The one practice may carry men to a high reward in heaven, and the other caſt them, with the unprofitable ſervant, into outer darkneſs.

There is therefore no foundation for people to content themſelves in any lower degrees of goodneſs, as being ſufficient to carry them to heaven, though not to the higheſt happineſs in heaven.

For conſider, thou heareſt there are different degrees of glory, that they are proportioned to different ſtates of goodneſs in this life; thou wilt therefore content thyſelf with a lower degree of goodneſs, being content to be of the loweſt order in heaven. Thou wilt have only ſo much piety as will ſave thee.

But conſider how vainly thou reaſoneſt; for though God giveth different rewards, it is not in the power of man to take them of himſelf. It is not for any one to ſay, I will practiſe ſo much goodneſs, and ſo take ſuch a reward. God ſeeth different abilities and frailties in men, which may move his goodneſs to be merciful to their different improvements in virtue: I grant thee, that there may be a lower ſtate of piety, which in ſome perſons may be accepted by God.

But conſider, that tho' there is ſuch a ſtate of piety that may be *accepted*; yet, that it cannot be *choſen*, it ceaſes to be that ſtate as ſoon thou chuſeſt it.

God may be merciful to a low eſtate of piety, by reaſon of ſome pitiable circumſtances that may attend it; but as ſoon as thou chuſeſt ſuch an eſtate of piety, it loſes thoſe pitiable circumſtances, and, inſtead of a lower ſtate of piety, is changed into a high ſtate of impiety.

So that tho' there are meaner improvements in virtue, which may make ſome perſons accepted by God,

yet this is no ground for content or ſatisfaction in ſuch a ſtate; becauſe it ceaſes to be ſuch a ſtate, and is quite another thing, for being choſen and ſatisfied with.

It appears therefore from theſe conſiderations, that, notwithſtanding God may accept of different degrees of goodneſs, and reward them with different degrees of glory in another life; yet that all Chriſtians are called to one and the ſame perfection, and equally obliged to labour after it.

Thus much may ſuffice to give the reader a general notion of perfection, and the neceſſity of endeavouring after it.

What it is, and what holy tempers it requires, will, I hope, be found ſufficiently explained in the following chapters.

CHAP. I.

THE wiſdom of mankind has for ſeveral ages of the world, been enquiring into the nature of man, and the nature of the world in which he is placed.

The wants and miſeries of human nature, and the vanity of worldly enjoyments, has made it difficult for the wiſeſt men to tell what human happineſs was, or wherein it conſiſted.

It has pleaſed the infinite goodneſs of God to ſatisfy all our wants and enquiries by a revelation made to the world by his Son Jeſus Chriſt.

This revelation has laid open the great ſecrets of Providence from the creation of the world, explained the preſent ſtate of things, and given man all the information that is neceſſary to quiet his anxieties, content him with his condition, and lead him ſafely to everlaſting reſt and happineſs.

It is now only neceſſary, that the poor wiſdom of man do not exalt itſelf againſt God, that we ſuffer our eyes to be opened by him that made them, and our lives to be conducted by him, in whom *we live, move, and have our being.*

For light is now come into the world, if men are willing to come out of darkneſs.

As happineſs is the ſole end of all our labours, ſo this divine revelation aims at nothing elſe.

It gives us right notions of ourſelves, of our true good and real evil; it ſhews us the true ſtate of our condition, both our vanity and excellence, our greatneſs and meanneſs, our felicity and miſery.

Before this, man was a riddle to himſelf, and his condition full of darkneſs and perplexity: A reſtleſs inhabitant of a miſerable diſordered world, *walking in a vain ſhadow, and diſquieting himſelf in vain.*

But this light has diſperſed all the anxiety of his vain conjectures; it has brought us acquainted with God, and by adding heaven to earth, and eternity to time, has opened ſuch a glorious view of things, as makes man, even in his preſent condition, full of a peace of God which paſſes all underſtanding.

This revelation acquaints, us that we have a ſpirit within us that was created after the divine image, that this ſpirit is now in a fallen corrupt condition, that the body in which it is placed is its grave or ſepulchre, where it is enſlaved to fleſhly thoughts, blinded with falſe notions of good and evil, and dead to all taſte and reliſh of its true happineſs.

It teaches us, that the world in which we live, is alſo in a diſordered irregular ſtate, and curſed for the ſake of man; that it is no longer the paradiſe that God made it, but the remains of a drowned world, full of marks of God's diſpleaſure, and the ſin of its inhabitants.

That it is a mere wildneſs, a ſtate of darkneſs, a vale of miſery, where vice and madneſs, dreams and ſhadows, variouſly pleaſe, agitate, and torment the ſhort, miſerable lives of men.

Devils alſo, and evil ſpirits, have here their reſidence, promoting the works of darkneſs, and wandering up and down ſeeking whom they may devour.

So that the condition of man, in his natural ſtate, ſeems to be, as if a perſon ſick of variety of diſeaſes, knowing neither his diſtempers nor his cure, ſhould be encloſed in ſome place, where he could hear, or ſee,

or feel, or taſte of nothing, but what tended to inflame his diſorders.

The excellency therefore of the Chriſtian religion appears in this, that it puts an end to this ſtate of things, blots out all the ideas of worldly wiſdom, brings the world itſelf to aſhes, and creates all a-new. It calls man from an animal life and earthly ſocieties, to be born again of the Holy Ghoſt, and be made a member of the kingdom of God.

It cruſhes into nothing the concerns of this life, condemns it as a ſtate of vanity and darkneſs, and leads man to a happineſs with God in the realms of light.

It propoſes the recovery of our ſouls, the enlivening us with the divine Spirit; it ſets before us new goods and evils, and forms us to a glorious participation of the divine Nature.

This is the one ſole end of Chriſtianity, to lead us from all thoughts of repoſe here, to ſeparate us from the world and worldly tempers, to deliver us from the folly of our paſſions, the ſlavery of our own natures, the power of evil ſpirits, and unite us to God, the true foundation of all good. This is the mighty change which Chriſtianity aims at, to put us into a new ſtate, reform our whole natures, purify our ſouls, and make them the inhabitants of heavenly and immortal bodies.

It does not leave us to grovel on in the deſires of the fleſh, to caſt about for worldly happineſs, and wander in darkneſs and exile from God; but prepares us for the true enjoyment of a divine life.

The manner by which it changes this whole ſtate of things, and raiſes us to an union with God, is equally great and wonderful.

I am the *way, the truth, and the life*, ſaith our bleſſed Saviour, *no man cometh unto the Father but by me.*

As all things were firſt created by the Son of God, and without him was *not any thing made that was made*; ſo are all things again reſtor'd and redeem'd by the ſame divine Perſon.

As nothing could come into being without him; ſo nothing

nothing can enter into a ſtate of happineſs or enjoyment of God, but by him.

The price and dignity of this redemption at once confounds the pride, and relieves the miſery of man. How fallen muſt he be from God, how diſorder'd and odious his nature, that ſhould need ſo great a Mediator to recommend his repentance! —— And, on the other hand, how full of comfort, that ſo high a method, ſo ſtupendous a means ſhould be taken, to reſtore him to a ſtate of peace and favour with God.

This is the true point of view in which every Chriſtian is to behold himſelf. He is to overlook the poor projects of human life, and conſider himſelf as a creature through his natural corruption falling into a ſtate of endleſs miſery; but by the mercy of God redeem'd to a condition of everlaſting felicity.

All the precepts and doctrines of the goſpel are founded on theſe two great truths, the deplorable corruption of human nature, and its new birth in Chriſt Jeſus.

The one includes all the miſery, the other all the happineſs of man.

It is on thoſe great doctrines, that the whole frame of Chriſtianity is built, forbidding only ſuch things as faſten us to the diſorders of ſin, and commanding only thoſe duties, which lead us into the liberty and freedom of the ſons of God.

The corruption of our nature makes mortification, ſelf-denial, and the death of our bodies neceſſary: becauſe human nature muſt be thus unmade, fleſh and blood muſt be thus changed, before it can enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Our new birth makes the reception of God's Spirit, and the participation of the holy Sacraments, neceſſary to form us to that life to which the reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt has entitled us.

So that, would we think, and act, and live, like Chriſtians, we muſt act ſuitably to theſe terms of our condition, fearing and avoiding all the motions of our corrupted nature, cheriſhing the ſecret inſpirations of the Holy Spirit, opening our minds for the reception of

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the divine life, and preſſing after all the graces and perfections of our new birth.

We muſt behave ourſelves conformably to this double capacity, we muſt fear, and watch, and pray, like men that are always in danger of eternal death, and we muſt believe and hope, labour and aſpire, like Chriſtians that are called to fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life.

This knowledge of ourſelves makes human life a ſtate of infinite importance, placed upon ſo dreadful a point betwixt two ſuch eternities.

Well might our bleſſed Saviour ſay to one that begg'd firſt to go and bury his father, *Follow me and let the dead bury their dead.*

For what is all the buſtle and hurry of the world but dead ſhew, and its greateſt agents but dead men, when compared with that ſtate of greatneſs, that real life to which the followers of Chriſt are redeemed?

Had we been made only for this world, worldly wiſdom had been our higheſt wiſdom; but ſeeing Chriſtianity has redeemed us to a contrary ſtate, ſince all its goods are in oppoſition to this life, worldly wiſdom is now our greateſt fooliſhneſs.

It is now our only wiſdom to underſtand our new ſtate aright, to let its goods and evils take poſſeſſion of our hearts, and conduct ourſelves by the principles of our redemption.

The nature and terms we ſtand in are of that concern as to deſerve all our thoughts, and are indeed only to be perceived by great ſerioufneſs and attention of mind.

The Chriſtian ſtate is an inviſible life in the Spirit of God, ſupported not by ſenſible goods, but the ſpiritual graces of faith and hope; ſo that the natural man, eſpecially while buſied in earthly cares and enjoyments, eaſily forgets that great and heavenly condition in which religion places him.

The changes which Chriſtianity maketh in the preſent ſtate of things are all inviſible, its goods and evils, its dignities and advantages, which are the only true ſtandards of all our actions, are not ſubject to the knowledge of our ſenſes.

In *God we live and move, and have our being*; but how unſeen, how unfelt is all this!

Chriſt is the *lamb ſlain from the foundation of the world*, the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He is the *Alpha* and *Omega*, the beginning and end of all things. The whole creation ſubſiſts in him and by him; nothing is in any order, nor any perſon in any favour with God, but by this great Mediator. But how inviſible, how unknown to all our ſenſes, is this ſtate of things!

The apoſtle tells us, that we Chriſtians are *come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, to the heavenly Jeruſalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, and to the general aſſembly of the firſt-born which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect, and to Jeſus the Mediator of the new covenant*, &c. *(a)*

But our ſenſes ſee or feel nothing of this ſtate of glory; they only ſhew us a ſociety amongſt vain and worldly men, labouring and contending for the poor enjoyments of a vain world.

We are temples of the Holy Ghoſt, conſcrated to God, members of Chriſt's myſtical body, of his fleſh and of his bones, receiving life, ſpirit and motion from him our head.

But our ſenſes ſee no farther than our parents and kindred according to the fleſh, and fix our hearts to earthly friendſhips and relations.

Religion turns our whole life into a ſacrifice to God, a ſtate of probation, from whence we muſt *all appear before the judgment-ſeat of Chriſt, that every one may receive the things done in his body*, &c. *(b)*

But our ſenſes, the maxims of this life, and the ſpirit of the world, teach quite another turn of mind; to enjoy the good things of life as our portion, to ſeek after riches and honours, and to dread nothing ſo much as poverty, diſgrace and perſecution. Well may this life be deemed a ſtate of darkneſs, ſince it thus clouds and covers all the true appearances of things, and keeps our

(a) Heb. xii. 22. *(b)* 2 Cor. v. 9.

our minds inſenſible and unaffected with matters of ſuch infinite moment.

We muſt obſerve, that, in ſcripture, Chriſtianity is conſtantly repreſented to us as a redemption from the ſlavery and corruption of our nature, and a raiſing us to a nearer enjoyment of the divine glory.

It knows of no miſery, but the death and miſery which ſin has made; nor of any happineſs, but the gifts and graces of the Holy Ghoſt, which form us to a great likeneſs of God.

Thus ſaith the apoſtle, *Jeſus Chriſt gave himſelf for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity.* (c)

He was manifeſted to take away our ſins. (d)

Who gave himſelf for our ſins, that he might deliver us from this evil world.

The ſame ſcriptures teach us, that as we are redeemed from this ſtate of ſin, ſo we are raiſed to a new life in Chriſt, to a participation of the divine Nature, and a fellowſhip with him in glory.

Thus our bleſſed Saviour prayeth for all his followers, *That they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee; that they alſo may be one in us. And the glory which thou gaveſt me, I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one. I in them, and thou in me, that they may be perfect in one.* (e)

Happy he that hath ears to hear, and a heart to feel the majeſty and glory of this deſcription of our new life in Chriſt!

For ſurely could we underſtand what our Saviour conceived when he ſent up this prayer to God, our hearts would be always praying, and our ſouls ever aſpiring after this ſtate of perfection, this union with Chriſt in God.

To proceed: *In my Father's houſe*, ſaith Chriſt, *are many manſions. I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am, there ye may be alſo.* (f)

The apoſtle tells us, that as *we have born the image of the earthly, we ſhall alſo bear the image of the heavenly.* (g)

And

(c) Tit. ii. 13. (d) 1 Joh. iii. 5. (e) Joh. xvii, 21.
(f) Joh. xiv. 23. (g) 1 Cor. xv.

And that *when* Chriſt, *who is our life, ſhall appear, then ſhall we alſo appear with him in glory. (h)*

Behold, ſaith St. John, *now we are the ſons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we ſhall be: but we know, that when he ſhall appear, we ſhall be like him; for we ſhall ſee him as he is. (i)*

I cannot leave this paſſage, without adding the apoſtle's concluſion to it. And *every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himſelf, even as he is pure.*

Which teaches us this leſſon, that no man, whatever he may think of his Chriſtian improvement, can be ſaid to have this hope in him, unleſs he ſhews it by ſuch a purification of himſelf, as may reſemble the purity of Chriſt—But to return:

St. *Paul* thus breaks forth into the praiſes of God: *Bleſſed be the God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who hath bleſſed us with all ſpiritual bleſſings in heavenly places in Chriſt. (k)* And again, *God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in ſins, hath quickned us together with Chriſt; and hath raiſed us up together, and made us ſit together in heavenly places in Chriſt Jeſus. (l)*

Theſe paſſages teach us, that Chriſtianity introduceth us into a new ſtate, made up of inviſible goods and ſpiritual bleſſings; that it ſo alters our condition, as to give us a new rank and degree even in this life; which the apoſtle expreſſes by making us *ſit together in heavenly places.*

So that tho' we are ſtill in the fleſh, yet, as the apoſtle ſaith, need we know no man after the fleſh; tho' we are ſtill inhabitants of this vale of miſery, yet are we ranked and placed in a certain order amongſt heavenly beings in Chriſt Jeſus.

Would we therefore know our true rank and condition, and what place we belong to, in the order of beings, we muſt ſearch after a *life that is hid with Chriſt in God.* We muſt conſider ourſelves as parts of Chriſt's myſtical body, and as members of the kingdom of heaven. In vain do we conſider the beauty and ſtrength

(h) Col. iii. 4. *(i)* 1 Joh. iii. 2. *(k)* Epheſ. i. 3. *(l)* Epheſ. ii. 4, 5.

ſtrength of our bodies, our alliances with men, the privileges of birth, and the diſtinctions of this world; for theſe things no more conſtitute the ſtate of human life, than rich *coffins* or beautiful *monuments* conſtitute the ſtate of the dead.

We juſtly pity the laſt poor efforts of human greatneſs, when we ſee a breathleſs carcaſs lying in *ſtate*. It appears to us to be ſo far from any real honour, that it rather looks like ridiculing the miſery of our nature. But were religion to form our judgments, the *life* of a proud, voluptuous, and ſenſual man, tho' ſhining in all the ſplendor of the world, would give us no higher an idea of human dignity, than that of a poor *corpſe* laid in ſtate.

For a *ſinner*, when glorying in *the luſt of the fleſh, the luſt of the eyes, and the pride of life*, ſhews us a more ſhocking ſight of a miſery ridiculed, than any pageantry that can expoſe the dead.

We have an apoſtle's authority to ſay, *that he who liveth in pleaſure, is dead while he liveth.*

This ſhews us, that when we enquire what our life is, or wherein it conſiſts, we muſt think of ſomething higher than the vigour of our blood, the gaiety of our ſpirits, or the enjoyments of ſenſible pleaſures; ſince theſe, tho' the allowed ſigns of living men, are often undeniable proofs of dead Chriſtians.

When therefore we would truly know what our life, our ſtate, our dignity, our good, or our evil is, we muſt look at nothing that is temporal, worldly, or ſenſible. We may as well dig in the earth for wiſdom, as look at fleſh and blood to ſee what we are, or at worldly enjoyments to find what we want, or at temporal evils to ſee what we have to fear.

Our bleſſed Saviour put an abſolute end to all enquiries of this kind, when he ſaid, *Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. (a)*

Here our bodies and all bodily enjoyments are at one daſh ſtruck out of the account of happineſs, and the preſent ſtate of things made ſo very low and inſignificant,

(a) Luke xii. 4,

cant, that he, who can only deprive us of them, has not power enough to deſerve our fear.

We muſt therefore, if we would conceive our true ſtate, our real good and evil, look farther than the dim eyes of fleſh can carry our views; we muſt, with the eyes of faith, penetrate into the inviſible world, the world of ſpirits, and conſider our order and condition amongſt them; a world, which (as St. *John* ſpeaks) *has no need of the ſun, neither of the moon to ſhine in it, for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the light of the lamb.* For it is there, amongſt eternal beings, that we muſt take an eternal fellowſhip, or fall into a kingdom of darkneſs and everlaſting miſery.

Chriſtianity is ſo divine in its nature, ſo noble in its ends, ſo extenſive in its views, that it has no leſſer ſubjects than theſe to entertain our thoughts.

It buries our bodies, burns the preſent world, triumphs over death by a general reſurrection, and opens all into an eternal ſtate.

It never conſiders us in any other reſpect, than as fallen ſpirits; it diſregards the diſtinctions of human ſociety, and propoſes nothing to our fears but eternal miſery, nor any thing to our hopes, but an endleſs enjoyment of the divine Nature.

This is the great and important condition in which Chriſtianity has placed us, above our bodies, above the world, above death, to be preſent at the diſſolution of all things, to ſee the earth in flames, and the heavens wrapt up like a ſcrowl, to ſtand at the general reſurrection, to appear at the univerſal judgment, and to live for ever, when all that our eyes have ſeen is paſſed away and gone.

Take upon thee therefore a ſpirit and temper ſuitable to this greatneſs of thy condition; remember that thou art an eternal ſpirit, that thou art for a few months and years in a ſtate of fleſh and blood, only to try whether thou ſhalt be for ever happy with God, or fall into everlaſting miſery with the devil.

Thou wilt often hear of other concerns, and other greatneſs in this world; thou wilt ſee every order of men, every family, every perſon purſuing ſome fancied

cied happineſs of his own, as if the world had not only happineſs, but a particular kind of happineſs for all its inhabitants.

But when thou ſeeſt this ſtate of human life, fancy that thou ſeeſt all the world aſleep, the prince no longer a prince, the beggar no longer begging, but every man ſleeping out of his proper ſtate; ſome happy, others tormented, and all changing their condition, as faſt as one fooliſh dream can ſucceed another.

When thou haſt ſeen this, thou haſt ſeen all that the world awake can do for thee; if thou wilt, thou may'ſt go to *ſleep* for a while, thou may'ſt lie down and *dream*; for, be as happy as the world can make thee, all is but ſleeping and dreaming; and what is ſtill worſe, it is like ſleeping in a ſhip when thou ſhouldſt be pumping out the water; or dreaming thou art a prince, when thou ſhouldſt be redeeming thyſelf from ſlavery.

Now this is no imaginary flight of a melancholy fancy, that too much exceeds the nature of things, but a ſober reflection juſtly ſuited to the vanity of worldly enjoyments.

For if the doctrines of Chriſtianity are true; if thou art that creature, that fallen ſpirit, that immortal nature which religion teaches us; if thou art to meet death, reſurrection and judgment, as the forerunners of an eternal ſtate, what are all the little flaſhes of pleaſure, the changing appearances of worldly felicities, but ſo many ſorts of dreams?

How canſt thou talk of the happineſs of riches, the advantages of fortune, the pleaſures of apparel, of ſtate and equipage, without being in a dream?

Is the *beggar* aſleep, when he fancies he is building himſelf fine houſes? Is the priſoner in a dream, when he imagines himſelf in open fields and fine groves? And can'ſt thou think thy immortal ſpirit is awake, whilſt it is delighting itſelf in the ſhadows and bubbles of worldly happineſs?

For if it be true, that man is upon his trial, if the trial is for eternity, if life is but a vapour, what is there that deſerves a ſerious thought, but how to get well

well out of the world, and make it a right paſſage to our eternal ſtate?

How can we prove that we are awake, that our eyes are open, but by ſeeing and feeling, and living according to theſe important circumſtances of our life?

If a man ſhould endeavour to pleaſe thee with fine deſcriptions of the riches, and pleaſures and dignities of the world in the *moon*; adding, that its air is always ſerene, and its ſeaſons always pleaſant: wouldſt thou not think it a ſufficient anſwer to ſay, *I am not to live there?*

When thy own falſe heart is endeavouring to pleaſe itſelf with worldly expectations, the joy of this or that way of life; is it not as good a reproof, to ſay to thy ſelf, *I am not to ſtay here?*

For where is the difference betwixt an earthly happineſs, from which thou art to be ſeparated for ever; and a happineſs in the moon, to which thou art never to go? Thou art to be for ever ſeparated from the earth, thou art to be eternal when the earth itſelf is loſt; is it not therefore the ſame vanity to project for happineſs on earth, as to propoſe a happineſs in the moon? For as thou art *never* to go to the one, ſo thou art to be *eternally* ſeparated from the other.

Indeed the littleneſs and inſignificancy of the boaſted honours of human life, appears ſufficiently from the things themſelves, without comparing them to the ſubjects of religion.

For ſee what they are in themſelves.

Ahaſuerus, that great prince of the eaſtern world, puts a queſtion to *Haman*, his chief miniſter of ſtate; he aſks him, *what ſhall be done unto the man, whom the king delighteth to honour? (a)*

Haman, imagining that he was the perſon whom the king had in his thoughts, anſwers in theſe words,

Let the royal apparel be brought which the king uſeth to wear, and the horſe that the king rideth upon, and the crown royal which is ſet upon his head; and let this apparel and horſe be delivered to the hand of one of the king's moſt noble princes, that they may array the man withal whom the

(a Eſther vi. 6.

the king delighteth to honour, and bring him on horſeback through the ſtreets of the city, and proclaim before him, Thus ſhall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour.

Here you ſee the ſum total of worldly honours.

An ambitious *Haman* cannot think of any thing greater to aſk; *Ahaſuerus*, the greateſt monarch in the world, has nothing greater to give to his greateſt favourite; powerful as he is, he can only give ſuch honours as theſe.

Yet it is to be obſerved, that if a poor *nurſe* was to pleaſe her *child*, ſhe muſt talk to it in the ſame language; ſhe muſt pleaſe it with the ſame fine things, and gratify its pride with honours of the ſame kind.

Yet theſe are the mighty things, for which men forget God, forget their immortality, forget their difference betwixt an eternity in heaven and an eternity in hell.

There needs no great underſtanding, no mighty depth of thought, to ſee through the vanity of all worldly enjoyments; do but talk of them, and you will be forced to talk of gewgaws, of ribbons and feathers.

Every man ſees the littleneſs of all ſorts of honours, but thoſe which he is looking after himſelf.

A private *Engliſh* gentleman, that is half diſtracted till he has got ſome little diſtinction, does at the ſame time deſpiſe the higheſt honours of other countries, and would not leave his own condition to poſſeſs the ridiculous greatneſs of an *Indian king*. He ſees the vanity and falſeneſs of their honours, but forgets that all honour placed in external things, is equally vain and falſe.

He does not conſider, that the difference of greatneſs is only the difference of flowers and feathers; and, that they who are dreſſing themſelves with *beads*, have as juſt a taſte of what adorns their perſons, as they who place the ſame pride in *diamonds*.

When we read of an eaſtern prince that is too great to feed himſelf, and thinks it a piece of grandeur to have

have other people put his meat into his mouth, we deſpiſe the folly of his pride.

But might we not as well deſpiſe the folly of their pride, who are aſhamed to uſe their legs, and think it adds to their ſtate to be removed from one place to another by other people.

For he that thinks it ſtately to be carried, and mean to walk on foot, has as true notions of greatneſs as he who is too haughty to put his meat in his own mouth.

Again, it is the manner of the ſame countries in the burial of their dead, to put a ſtaff, and ſhoes, and money, in the ſepulchre along with the corpſe.

We juſtly cenſure the folly and ignorance of ſuch a poor contrivance to aſſiſt the dead; but, if we did but as truly underſtand what life is, we ſhould ſee as much to ridicule in the poor contrivances to aſſiſt the living.

For how many things in life do people labour after, break their reſt and peace to get; which yet, when gotten, are of as much real uſe to them, as a ſtaff and ſhoes to a *corpſe* under ground? They are always adding ſomething to their life, which is only like adding another pair of ſhoes to a body in the grave.

Thou mayſt hire more ſervants, new paint thy rooms, make more fine beds, eat out of *plate*, and put on richer apparel: and theſe will help thee to be happy, as *golden* ſtaves, or *painted* ſhoes, will help a dead man to walk.

See here therefore the true nature of all worldly *ſhew* and *figure*; it will make us as great as thoſe are, who are dreaming that they are kings, as rich as thoſe who fancy that they have eſtates in the moon, and as happy as thoſe, who are buried with ſtaves in their hands.

Now this is not carrying matters too high, or impoſing upon our ſelves with any ſubtilties of reaſoning or ſound of words; for the value of worldly riches and honours can no more be too much leſſened, than the riches and greatneſs of the other life can be too much exalted. We don't cheat ourſelves out of any real happineſs, by looking upon all worldly honours

as

as bubbles, any more than we cheat our ſelves by ſecuring honours that are ſolid and eternal.

There is no more happineſs loſt by not being *great* and *rich* as thoſe are amongſt whom we live, than not being *dreſs'd* and *adorn'd* as they are who live in *China* or *Japan*.

Thou art no happier for having painted ceilings and marble walls in thy houſe, than if the ſame finery was in thy *ſtables*; if thou eateſt upon plate, it maketh thee juſt as happy as if thy horſes wore ſilver ſhoes.

To diſregard gold, jewels and equipage, is no more running away from any real good, than if we only deſpiſed a feather or a garland of flowers.

So that he who condemns *all* the external ſhew and ſtate of life as equally vain, is no more deceived, or carried to too high a contempt for the things of this life, than he that only condemns the vanity of the vaineſt things.

You don't think yourſelf impoſed upon, or talked out of any real happineſs, when you are perſuaded not to be as vain and ambitious as *Alexander*.

And can you think that you are impoſed upon, or drawn from any real good, by being perſuaded to be as meek and lowly as the holy Jeſus?

There is as much ſober judgment, as ſound ſenſe, in conforming to the fulneſs of Chriſt's humility, as in avoiding the height and extravagance of *Alexander*'s vanity.

Don't therefore think to compound matters, or that it is enough to avoid the vanity of the vaineſt men. There is as much folly in ſeeking little, as great honours; as great a miſtake in needleſs expence upon thyſelf, as upon any thing elſe. Thou muſt not only be leſs vain and ambitious than an *Alexander*, but practiſe the humility of the bleſſed *Jeſus*.

If thou remembreſt, that the whole race of mankind are a race of fallen ſpirits, that paſs through this world as an arrow paſſes through the air, thou wilt ſoon perceive that all things here are equally great and equally little, and that there is no wiſdom or happineſs, but in getting away to the beſt advantage.

If thou rememberest that this life is but a vapour, that thou art in the body, only to be holy, humble, and heavenly-minded; that thou standest upon the brinks of death, resurrection, and judgment; and that these great things will suddenly come upon thee like a thief in the night, thou wilt see a vanity in all the gifts of fortune, greater than any words can express.

Do but therefore know thyself, as religion has made thee known, do but see thyself in the light which Christ has brought into the world; and then thou wilt see that nothing concerns thee, but what concerns an everlasting Spirit that is going to God; and that there are no enjoyments here that are worth a thought, but such as may make thee more perfect in those holy tempers, which will carry thee to heaven.

CHAP. II.

CHRISTIANITY is not a *school* for the teaching of mortal virtue, the polishing our manners, or forming us to live a life of this world with decency and gentility.

It is deeper and more divine in its designs, and has much nobler ends than these; it implies an *entire change* of life, a dedication of ourselves, our souls and bodies unto God, in the strictest and highest sense of the words.

Our Blessed Saviour came into the world not to make any composition with it, or to divide things between heaven and earth; but to make war with every state of life, to put an end to the designs of flesh and blood, and to shew us, that we must either leave this world to become sons of God, or, by enjoying it, take our portion amongst devils and damned spirits.

Death is not more certainly a separation of our souls from our bodies, than the Christian life is a separation of our souls from worldly tempers, vain indulgences, and unnecessary cares.

No sooner are we baptiz'd, but we are to consider ourselves as new and holy persons, that are entered upon a new state of things, that are devoted to God,

and have renounced all, to be fellow-heirs with Chriſt, and members of his kingdom.

There is no alteration of life, no change of condition, that implies half ſo much, as that alteration which Chriſtianity introduceth.

It is a kingdom of heaven begun upon earth, and by being made members of it, we are entered into a new ſtate of goods and evils.

Eternity altereth the face and nature of every thing in this world; life is only a trial, proſperity becometh adverſity, pleaſure a miſchief, and nothing a good, but as it increaſeth our hope, purifieth our natures, and prepareth us to receive higher degrees of happineſs.

Let us now ſee what it is to enter into this ſtate of redemption.

Our own church, in conformity with ſcripture and the practice of the pureſt ages, makes it neceſſary for us to renounce the *pomps and vanities of the world*, before we can be received as members of Chriſtian communion.

Did we enough conſider this, we ſhould find, that whenever we yield ourſelves up to the pleaſures, profits and honours of this life, that we turn *apoſtates*, break our covenant with God, and go back from the expreſs conditions, on which we were admitted into the communion of Chriſt's church.

If we conſult either the life or doctrines of our Saviour, we ſhall find that Chriſtianity is a covenant that contains only the terms of changing and reſigning this world for another that is to come.

It is a ſtate of things that wholly regards eternity, and knows of no other goods and evils, but ſuch as relate to another life.

It is a kingdom of heaven that has no intereſts in this world, than as it takes its members out of it; and when the number of the elect is compleat, this world will be conſumed with fire, as having no other reaſon of its exiſtence, than the furniſhing members for that bleſſed ſociety which is to laſt for ever.

I cannot here omit obſerving the folly and vanity of human wiſdom, which, full of imaginary projects,

pleaſes

pleaſes itſelf with its mighty proſperities, its laſting eſtabliſhments in a world doomed to deſtruction, and which is to laſt no longer than till a ſufficient number are redeemed out of it.

Did we ſee a number of animals haſtening to take up their apartments, and contending for the beſt places, in a building that was to be beat down as ſoon as its old inhabitants were got ſafe out, we ſhould ſee a contention full as wiſe as the wiſdom of worldly ambition.

To return: Chriſtianity is therefore a courſe of holy diſcipline, ſolely fitted to the cure and recovery of fallen ſpirits, and intends ſuch a change in our nature, as may raiſe us to a nearer union with God, and qualify us for ſuch high degrees of happineſs.

It is no wonder therefore, if it makes no proviſion for the fleſh, if it condemns the maxims of human wiſdom, and indulges us in no worldly projects, ſince its very end is to redeem us from all the vanity, vexation and miſery of this ſtate of things, and to place us in a condition where we ſhall be fellow-heirs with Chriſt, and as the angels of God.

That Chriſtianity requires a change of nature, a new life perfectly devoted to God, is plain from the ſpirit and tenour of the goſpel.

The Saviour of the world ſaith, *That except a man be born again of water and the ſpirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God (a)* We are told, that *to as many as received him, to them he gave power to become the ſons of God, which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the fleſh, nor of the will of man, but of God. (b)*

Theſe words plainly teach us, that Chriſtianity implies ſome great change of nature; that as our birth was to us the beginning of a new life, and brought us into a ſociety of earthly enjoyments; ſo Chriſtianity is another birth, that brings us into a condition altogether as new as when we firſt ſaw the light.

We begin again to be, we enter upon freſh terms of life, have new relations, new hopes and fears, and entire change of every thing that can be called good or evil.

(a) John iii. 5. (b) John i. 12.

This new birth, this principle of a new life is the very eſſence and ſoul of Chriſtianity, it is the ſeal of the promiſes, the mark of our ſonſhip, the earneſt of the inheritance, the ſecurity of our hope, and the foundation of all our acceptance with God.

He that is in Chriſt, ſaith the apoſtle, *is a new creature; and if any man hath not the ſpirit of Chriſt, he is none of his.* (*a*)

And again, *He who is joined to the Lord, is one ſpirit.* (*b*)

It is not therefore any number of moral virtues, no partial obedience, no modes of worſhip, no external acts of adoration, no articles of faith, but a new principle of life, an entire change of temper, that makes us true Chriſtians.

If the *ſpirit of him, who raiſed up Jeſus from the dead, dwell in you; he that raiſed up Chriſt from the dead, ſhall alſo quicken your mortal bodies by his ſpirit that dwelleth in you.* (*c*) *For as many as are led by the ſpirit of God, they are the ſons of God.*

Since therefore the ſcriptures thus abſolutely require a life ſuitable to the ſpirit and temper of Jeſus Chriſt, ſince they allow us not the privilege of the ſons of God, unleſs we live and act according to the ſpirit of God; it is paſt doubt, that Chriſtianity requires an entire change of nature and temper, a life devoted perfectly to God.

For what can imply a greater change, than from a carnal to a ſpiritual mind; what can be more contrary, than the works of the fleſh are to the works of the ſpirit? it is the difference of heaven and hell.

Light and darkneſs are but faint reſemblances of that great contrariety that is betwixt the ſpirit of God, and the ſpirit of the world.

Its wiſdom is fooliſhneſs, its friendſhip is enmity with God.

All that is in the world, the luſt of the fleſh, the luſt of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father. (*d*)

Worldly

(*a*) Rom. viii. 9. (*b*) 1 Cor. vi, 17. (*c*) Rom. viii. 11.
(*d*) 1 John ii. 16.

Worldly opinions, proud reaſonings, fleſhly cares and earthly projects, are all ſo many falſe judgments mere lies, and we know who is the father of lies.

For this reaſon, the ſcripture makes the devil, the god and prince of this world, becauſe the ſpirit and temper which reigns there is entirely from him; and ſo far as we are governed by the wiſdom and temper of the world, ſo far are we governed by that evil power of darkneſs.

If we would ſee more of this contrariety, and what a change our new life in Chriſt implies, let us conſider what it is to be *born of God.*

St. *John* tells us one ſure mark of our new birth, in the following words, *He that is born of God, overcometh the world,* (*b*)

So that the *new birth,* or the Chriſtian life, is conſidered with oppoſition to the *world,* and all that is in it, its vain cares, its falſe glories, proud deſigns, and ſenſual pleaſures: If we have overcome theſe, ſo as to be governed by other cares, other glories, other deſigns, and other pleaſures, then are we born of God: Then is the wiſdom of this world, and the friendſhip of this world, turned into the wiſdom and friendſhip of God, which will for ever keep us *heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Chriſt.*

Again, the ſame apoſtle helps us to another ſign of our new life in God. *Whoſoever,* ſaith he, *is born of God, doth not commit ſin; for his ſeed remaineth in him, and he cannot ſin, becauſe he is born of God.* (*c*)

This is not to be underſtood, as if he that was born of God was therefore in an abſolute ſtate of perfection, and incapable afterwards of falling into any thing that was ſinful.

It only means, that he that is born of God, is poſſeſſed of a temper and principle, that makes him utterly hate and labour to avoid all ſin; he is therefore ſaid *not to commit ſin,* in ſuch a ſenſe as a man may be ſaid not to do that which it is his conſtant care and principle to prevent being done.

He cannot ſin, as it may be ſaid of a man that has

(*b*) 1 Eph. v. 4. (*c*) 1 Eph. iii. 9.

no principle but covetouſneſs that he cannot do things that are expenſive, becauſe it is his conſtant care and labour to be ſparing; and if expence happen, it is contrary to his intention; it is his pain and trouble, and he returns to ſaving with a double diligence.

Thus is he that is born of God, purity and holineſs is his only aim; and he is more incapable of having any ſinful intentions, than the *miſer* is incapable of generous expence; and if he finds himſelf in any ſin, it is his greateſt pain and trouble, and he labours after holineſs with a double zeal.

This it is to be born of God, when we have a temper and mind ſo entirely devoted to purity and holineſs, that it may be ſaid of us in a juſt ſenſe, that we cannot commit ſin. When holineſs is ſuch a habit in our minds, ſo directs and forms our deſigns, as covetouſneſs and ambition directs and governs the actions of ſuch men as are governed by no other principles; then are we alive in God, and living members of the myſtical body of his Son Jeſus Chriſt.

This is our true ſtandard and meaſure by which we are to judge of our ſelves; we are not true Chriſtians, unleſs we are born of God; and we are not born of God, unleſs it can be ſaid of us in this ſenſe, that we cannot commit ſin.

When by an inward principle of holineſs, we ſtand ſo diſpoſed to all degrees of virtue, as the ambitious man ſtands diſpoſed to all ſteps of greatneſs; when we hate and avoid all kinds of ſin, as the covetous man hates and avoids all ſorts of loſs and expence; then are we ſuch ſons of God as cannot commit ſin.

We muſt therefore examine into the ſtate and temper of our minds, and ſee whether we be thus changed in our natures, thus born again to a new life; whether we be ſo ſpiritual, as to have overcome the world, ſo holy, as that we cannot commit ſin; ſince it is the undeniable doctrine of ſcripture, that this ſtate of mind, this new birth, is as neceſſary to ſalvation, as the believing in Jeſus Chriſt.

To be eminent therefore for any particular virtue, to deteſt and avoid ſeveral kinds of ſin, is juſt nothing

at all; its excellency (as the apoſtle ſaith of ſome particular virtues) is but as *ſounding braſs and a tinkling cymbal.*

But when the temper and ſtate of our ſouls is entirely changed, when we are renewed in the ſpirit of our minds, and are full of a reliſh and deſire of all godlineſs, of a fear and abhorrence of all evil; then, as St. *John* ſpeaks, *may we know that we are of the truth, and ſhall aſſure our hearts before him; then ſhall we know, that he abideth in us by the ſpirit, which he hath given us.* (*a*)

We have already ſeen two marks of thoſe that are born of God; the one is, that they have overcome the world; the other, that they do not commit ſin.

To theſe I ſhall only add a third, which is given us by Chriſt himſelf; *I ſay unto you, Love your enemies, bleſs them that curſe you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which deſpitefully uſe you and perſecute you, that you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven.* (*b*)

Well may a Chriſtian be ſaid to be a *new creature*, and Chriſtianity an entire change of temper; ſince ſuch a diſpoſition as this is made ſo neceſſary, that without it, we cannot be the children of our Father which is in heaven; and if we are not his children, neither is he our Father.

It is not therefore enough that we love our friends, benefactors and relations; but we muſt love like God, if we will ſhew that we are born of him. We muſt, like him, have an univerſal love and tenderneſs for all mankind, imitating that love, which would that all men ſhould be ſaved.

God *is love*; and this we are to obſerve as the true ſtandard of ourſelves, that *he, who dwelleth in God, dwelleth in love*; and conſequently he, who dwelleth not in love, dwelleth not in God.

It is impoſſible therefore to be a *true* Chriſtian, and an *enemy* at the ſame time.

Mankind has no enemy but the devil, and they who partake of his malicious and ill-natur'd ſpirit.

There is perhaps no duty of religion that is ſo contrary to fleſh and blood as this; but as difficult as it

(*a*) 1 Eph. iii. 19. 24. (*b*) Matt. v. 44.

may ſeem to a worldly mind, it is ſtill neceſſary, and will eaſily be performed by ſuch as are in Chriſt new creatures.

For take but away earthly goods and evils, and you take away all hatred and malice, for they are the only cauſes of thoſe baſe tempers. He therefore, that *hath overcome the world*, hath overcome all the occaſions of envy and ill nature; for, having put himſelf in this ſituation, he can pity, pray for, and forgive all his enemies, who want leſs forgiveneſs from him, than he expects from his heavenly Father.

Let us here a while contemplate the height of Chriſtian holineſs, and that God-like ſpirit which our religion requireth. This duty of univerſal love and benevolence, even to our bittereſt enemies, may ſerve to convince us, that to be Chriſtians, we muſt be *born again*, change our natures, and have no governing deſire of our ſouls, but that of being made like God.

For we cannot exerciſe or delight in this duty, till we rejoice and delight only in increaſing our likeneſs to God.

We may from this, as well as from what has been before obſerved, be infallibly aſſured, that Chriſtianity does not conſiſt in any partial amendment of our lives, any particular moral virtues, but in an entire change of our natural temper, a life wholly devoted to God.

To proceed:

This ſame doctrine is farther taught by our bleſſed Saviour, when, ſpeaking of little children, he ſaith, *Suffer them to come unto me, for of ſuch is the kingdom of God.* And again, *Whoſoever ſhall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, ſhall in no wiſe enter therein.* (*a*)

If we are not reſolved to deceive our ſelves, to have eyes and ſee not, ears and hear not, we muſt perceive that theſe words imply ſome mighty change in our nature.

For what can make us more contrary to ourſelves, than to lay aſide all our manly wiſdom, our mature judgments, our boaſted abilities, and become infants in

(*a*) Luke xviii. 16.

in nature and temper, before we can partake of this heavenly ſtate?

We reckon it change enough from babes to be men, and ſurely it muſt ſignify as great an alteration to be reduced from men to a ſtate of infancy.

One peculiar condition of infants is this, that they have every thing to learn, they are to be taught by others, that they are to hope and fear, and wherein their proper happineſs conſiſts.

It is in this ſenſe, that we are chiefly to become as infants, to be as tho' we had every thing to learn, and ſuffer our ſelves to be taught what we are to chuſe, and what to avoid; to pretend to no wiſdom of our own, but be ready to purſue that happineſs which God in Chriſt propoſes to us, and to accept it with ſuch ſimplicity of mind, as children that have nothing of our own to oppoſe to it.

But now, is this infant-temper thus eſſential to the Chriſtian life? does the kingdom of God conſiſt only of ſuch as are ſo affected? let this then be added as another undeniable proof, that chriſtianity requires a *new nature* and temper of mind; and that this temper is ſuch, as having renounced the prejudices of life, the maxims of human wiſdom, yields itſelf with a child like ſubmiſſion and ſimplicity to be entirely governed by the precepts and doctrines of Chriſt.

Craft and policy, ſelfiſh cunning, proud abilities, and vain endowments, have no admittance into this holy ſtate of ſociety with Chriſt in God.

The wiſdom of this world, the intrigues of life, the deſigns of greatneſs and ambition, lead to another kingdom; and he that would follow Chriſt, muſt empty himſelf of this vain furniture, and put on the meek ornaments of infant and undeſigning ſimplicity.

Where is the wiſe? where is the ſcribe? where is the diſputer of this world? ſaith the apoſtle, *hath not God made fooliſh the wiſdom of this world?* (*a*)

If therefore we will partake of the wiſdom of God, we muſt think and judge of this world, and its moſt boaſted gifts, as the wiſdom of God judgeth of them;

(*a*) 1 Cor. i. 20.

we muſt deem them fooliſhneſs, and with undivided hearts labour after one wiſdom, one perfection, one happineſs, in being entirely devoted to God.

This compariſon of the ſpirit of a Chriſtian, to the temper of children, may alſo ſerve to recommend to us a certain ſimplicity of manners, which is a great ornament of behaviour, and is indeed always the effect of a heart entirely devoted to God.

For as the tempers of men are made deſigning and deceitful, by their having many and ſecret ends to bring about; ſo the heart, that is entirely devoted to God, is at unity with itſelf and all others; it being wholly taken up with *one great* deſign, has no little ſucceſſes that it labours after, and ſo is naturally open, ſimple, and undeſigning in all the affairs of life.

Altho' what has been already obſerved in the foregoing pages might be thought ſufficient to ſhew, that Chriſtianity requires a new nature, a life entirely devoted to God; yet ſince the ſcriptures add other evidences of the ſame truth, I muſt quote a paſſage or two more on this head.

The holy ſpirit of God is not ſatisfied with repreſenting that change which Chriſtianity introduceth, by telling us, that it is a new birth, a being born of God, and the like; but proceeds to convince us of the ſame truth by another way of ſpeaking, by repreſenting it as a ſtate of death.

Thus ſaith the apoſtle, *Ye are dead and your life is hid with Chriſt in God.* (*a*)

That is, you Chriſtians are dead as to this world, and the life which you now live is not to be reckoned by any viſible or worldly goods, but is hid in Chriſt, is a ſpiritual enjoyment, a life of faith, and not of ſight; ye are members of that myſtical body, of which Chriſt is the head; and entered into a kingdom, which is not of this world.

And in this ſtate of death are we as Chriſtians to continue till *Chriſt, who is our life, ſhall appear; and then ſhall we alſo appear with him in glory.* (*b*)

To ſhew us that this death begins with our Chriſtian ſtate,

(*a*) Col. iii. 3. (*b*) Ibid. 4.

ſtate, we are ſaid to be *buried with him in baptiſm*; ſo that we entered into this ſtate of death at our baptiſm, when we entered into Chriſtianity.

Know ye not, ſays the apoſtle, *that ſo many of us as were baptiz'd into Jeſus Chriſt, were baptiz'd into his death? therefore we are buried with him by baptiſm into death.* (*a*)

Now, Chriſtians may be ſaid to be baptiz'd into the death of Chriſt, if their baptiſm puts them into a ſtate like to that in which our Saviour was at his death. The apoſtle ſhews this to be the meaning of it, by ſaying, *If we have been planted together in the likeneſs of his death*, that is, if our baptiſm has put us into a ſtate like that of his death.

So that Chriſtian baptiſm is not only an external rite, by which we are entered into the external ſociety of Chriſt's church; but is a ſolemn conſecration, which preſents us an offering to God, as Chriſt was offer'd at his death.

We are therefore no longer alive to the enjoyments of this world; but as Chriſt was then nail'd to the croſs, and devoted entirely to God, that he might be made *perfect through ſufferings*, and aſcend to the right hand of God; ſo is our old man to be crucified, and we conſecrated to God, by a conformity to the death of Chriſt, that *like as Chriſt was raiſed from the dead by the glory of the Father, even ſo we alſo ſhould walk in newneſs of life: and being riſen with Chriſt, ſhould ſeek thoſe things which are above.*

This is the true undeniable ſtate of Chriſtianity; baptiſm does not make us effectually Chriſtians, unleſs it brings us into a ſtate of death, conſecrates us to God, and begins a life ſuitable to that ſtate of things, to which our Saviour is riſen from the dead. This, and no other than this, is the holineſs and ſpiritual temper of Chriſtian life, which implies ſuch a reſignation of mind, ſuch a dedication of ourſelves to God, as may reſemble the death of Chriſt; and on the other hand, ſuch a newneſs of life, ſuch an aſcenſion of the ſoul, ſuch a holy and heavenly behaviour, as may ſhew that

(*a*) Rom. vi. 4.

that we are riſen with Chriſt, and belong to that glorious ſtate, where he now ſits at the right hand of God.

It is in this ſenſe, that the Son of God ſaith of his diſciples, *they are not of this world, even as I am not of this world*; being not left to live the life of the world, but choſen out of it for the purpoſes of his kingdom, that they might copy after his death and oblation of himſelf to God.

And this is the condition of all Chriſtians to the conſummation of all things, who are to carry on the ſame deſigns, and by the ſame means raiſe out of this corrupted ſtate, a number of fellow-heirs with Chriſt in everlaſting glory. The Saviour of the world has purchaſed mankind with his blood, not to live in eaſe and pleaſurable enjoyments, not to ſpend their time in ſoftneſs and luxury, in the gratifications of pride, idleneſs, and vanity; but to drink of this cup, to be baptiz'd with the baptiſm that he was baptiz'd with, to make war with their corrupt natures, humble themſelves, mortify the deſires of the fleſh, and like him be made perfect through ſufferings.

St. Paul ſo well knew this to be the deſign and ſpirit of religion, that he puts his title to the benefits of Chriſt's reſurrection upon it, when he ſays,

That I may know him, and the power of his reſurrection, and the fellowſhip of his ſufferings, being made conformable to his death. (a)

It is his being made conformable to his death, on which he founds his hopes of ſharing in the reſurrection of Chriſt. If Chriſtians think, that ſalvation is now to be had on ſofter terms; and that a life of indulgence and ſenſual gratifications is conſiſtent with the terms of the goſpel; and that they need not now be made conformable to his death; they are miſerably blind, and as much miſtake their Saviour, as the worldly Jews, who expected a temporal Meſſiah to deliver them.

Our redemption is a redemption by ſacrifice, and none are redeemed, but they who conform to it. *If we ſuffer with him, we ſhall alſo reign with him.*

We muſt then, if we ſhould be wiſe unto ſalvation, die

(a) Philip. iii. 10.

die and riſe again like Chriſt, and make all the actions of our life holy by offering them to God. *Whether we eat or drink, or whatſoever we do, we muſt do all to the glory of God.*

Since therefore he that is called to Chriſtianity, is thus called to an imitation of the *death* of Chriſt, to *forbear* from ſin, to overcome the *world*, to be born of the *ſpirit*, to be born of God; theſe ſurely will be allowed to be ſufficient evidences, that Chriſtianity requireth an *entire change* of our nature, a life perfectly devoted to God.

Now, if this is Chriſtian piety, it may ſerve to inſtruct two ſorts of people:

Firſt, thoſe who are content with an outward decency and regularity of life: I don't mean ſuch as are hypocritical in their virtues; but all thoſe who are content with an outward form of behaviour, without that inward newneſs of heart and ſpirit which the goſpel requireth.

Charity, chaſtity, ſobriety and juſtice, may be practiſed without Chriſtian piety: a *Jew*, a *Heathen*, may be charitable and temperate; but, to make theſe virtues become parts of Chriſtian piety, they muſt proceed from a heart *truly* turned unto God, that is full of an *infant* ſimplicity, that is *crucified* with Chriſt, that is *born* again of the ſpirit, that has overcome the *world*. Temperance or juſtice, without this *turn* of heart, may be the temperance of a *Jew* or a *Heathen*; but it is not Chriſtian temperance till it proceed from a true Chriſtian ſpirit. Could we do and ſuffer all that Chriſt himſelf did or ſuffered; yet, if it was not all done in the *ſame ſpirit* and temper of Chriſt, we ſhould have none of his merit.

A Chriſtian therefore muſt be ſober, charitable and juſt, upon the ſame principles, and with the ſame ſpirit, that he receives the holy *ſacrament*, for ends of religion, as acts of obedience to God, as means of purity and holineſs, and as ſo many inſtances of a heart devoted to God.

As the bare eating of bread and drinking wine in the holy *ſacrament*, is of no uſe to us, without thoſe religi-

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ous diſpoſitions which conſtitute the true frame of a pious mind, ſo it is the ſame in all other duties; they are mere outward ceremonies and uſeleſs actions, unleſs they are performed in the *ſpirit* of religion: charity and ſobriety are of no value, till they are ſo many inſtances of a heart truly devoted to God.

A Chriſtian therefore is to be ſober, not only ſo far as anſwers the ends of a decent and orderly life, but in ſuch a manner as becomes one, who is *born* of the Holy Spirit, that is made one with Chriſt, who dwells in Chriſt, and Chriſt in him. He muſt be ſober in ſuch a meaſure as beſt ſerves the ends of religion, and practiſe ſuch abſtinence as may make him fitteſt for the holineſs, purity, and perfection of the Chriſtian life.

He muſt be charitable, not ſo far as ſuits with humanity and good eſteem amongſt men, but in ſuch a meaſure as is according to the doctrines and *ſpirit* of religion.

For neither charity, nor temperance, nor any other virtue, are parts of Chriſtian holineſs, till they are made holy and religious, by ſuch a piety of heart, as ſhews that we live *wholly* unto God.

This is what cannot be too much conſidered by a great many people, whoſe religion has made no change in their hearts, but only conſiſts in an external decency of life, who are ſober without the piety of ſobriety, who pray without devotion, who give alms without charity, and are Chriſtians without the ſpirit of Chriſtianity.

Let them remember, that religion is to *alter* our nature, that Chriſtian piety conſiſts in a *change* of heart, that it implies a new turn of ſpirit, a ſpiritual death, a ſpiritual life, a dying to the world, and a living wholly unto God.

Secondly, This doctrine may ſerve to inſtruct thoſe who have lived ſtrangers to religion, what they are to do to become true Chriſtians.

Some people, who are aſhamed of the folly of their lives, and begin to look towards religion, think they have done enough when they either alter the outward courſe

courſe of their lives, abate ſome of their extravagancies, or become careful of ſome particular virtue.

Thus a man, whoſe life has been a courſe of folly, thinks he has made a ſufficient change, by becoming temperate. Another imagines he has ſufficiently declar'd for religion, by not neglecting the publick worſhip as he uſed to do. A lady fancies that ſhe lives enough to God, becauſe ſhe has left off *plays* and *paint*, and lives more at home than in the former part of her life.

But ſuch people ſhould conſider, that religion is no one particular virtue; that it does not conſiſt in the *fewneſs* of our vices, or in any particular amendment of our lives; but in ſuch a *thorough change* of heart, as makes piety and holineſs the meaſure and rule of all our tempers.

It is a miſerable error to be content with ourſelves, becauſe we are leſs vain or covetous, more ſober and decent in our behaviour than we uſe to be; yet this is the ſtate of many people, who think they have ſufficiently reform'd their lives, becauſe they are in ſome degree different from what they were. They think it enough to be changed from what they were, without conſidering how thorough a change religion requires.

But let ſuch people remember, that they, who thus *meaſure themſelves by themſelves, are not wiſe.* Let them remember, that they are not diſciples of Chriſt, till they have, like him, offered *their whole body and ſoul* as a reaſonable and lively ſacrifice unto God; that they are not members of Chriſt's myſtical body, till they are united unto him by a *new ſpirit*; that they have not entered into the kingdom of God, till they have entered with an *infant ſimplicity* of heart, till they are ſo born again as not to commit ſin, ſo full of an heavenly ſpirit, as to have *overcome the world.*

Nothing leſs than this *great change* of heart and mind can give any one any aſſurance, that he is truly turned to God. There is but this one term of ſalvation, *He that is in Chriſt, is a new creature.* How inſignificant all other attainments are, is ſufficiently ſhewn in the following

following words: *Many will ſay to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not propheſied in thy name? and in thy name have caſt out devils? and in thy name have done many wonderful works? And then will I profeſs unto them, I never knew you. Depart from me, ye that work iniquity.* (*a*)

So that there is no religion that will ſtand us in any ſtead, but that which is the *converſion* of the heart to God; when all our tempers are tempers of piety, ſpringing from a ſoul that is *born again of the ſpirit*, that tends with one full bent to a perfection and happineſs in the enjoyment of God.

Let us therefore look carefully to ourſelves, and conſider what manner of ſpirit we are of; let us not think our condition ſafe, becauſe we are of this or that church or communion, or becauſe we are ſtrict obſervers of the external offices of religion; for theſe are marks that belong to more than belong to Chriſt. All are not his, that *prophecy*, or even *work miracles in his name*; much leſs thoſe, who with worldly minds and corrupt hearts are only baptiz'd in his name.

If religion has rais'd us into a *new* world; if it has filled us with *new* ends of life; if it has taken poſſeſſion of our hearts, and alter'd the whole turn of our minds; if it has chang'd all our ideas of things, given us a new ſet of hopes and fears, and taught us to live by the *realities* of an inviſible world; then may we humbly hope, that we are true followers of the holy Jeſus, and ſuch as *may rejoice in the day of Chriſt, that we have neither run in vain, nor labour'd in vain.*

CHAP. III.

THE Chriſtian religion being to raiſe a *new* ſpiritual, and as yet inviſible world, and to place man in a certain order amongſt *thrones, principalities*, and ſpiritual beings, is at entire enmity with this preſent corrupt ſtate of fleſh and blood.

It ranks the preſent world along with the fleſh and the devil, as an equal enemy to thoſe glorious ends, and

(*a*) Matth. vii. 22.

and that perfection of human nature, which our redemption propoſes.

It pleaſed the wiſdom of God to indulge the *Jews* in worldly hopes and fears.

It was then ſaid, *Therefore ſhall ye keep all the commandments, which I command you this day, that ye may be ſtrong, and go in and poſſeſs the land whither you go to poſſeſs it.*

The goſpel is quite of another nature, and is a call to a very different ſtate; it lays its firſt foundation in the renunciation of the world, as a ſtate of falſe goods and enjoyments, which feed the vanity and corruption of our nature, fill our hearts with fooliſh and wicked paſſions, and keep us ſeparate from God, the only happineſs of all ſpirits.

My kingdom, ſaith our bleſſed Saviour, *is not of this world*; by which we may be aſſured, that no worldlings are of his kingdom.

We have a farther repreſentation of the contrariety that there is betwixt this kingdom and the concerns of this world. *A certain man*, ſaith our Lord, *made a great ſupper, and bade many, and ſent his ſervant at ſupper-time, to ſay to them that were bidden, Come, for all things are now ready; and they all with one conſent began to make excuſe. The firſt ſaid, I have bought a piece of ground, and I muſt needs go and ſee it; another ſaid, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them, I pray thee have me excuſed; another ſaid, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.*

We find that the maſter of the houſe was angry, and ſaid, *None of thoſe men which were bidden ſhall taſte of my ſupper.* (*a*)

Our Saviour, a little afterwards, applies it all in this manner, *Whoſoever he be of you, that forſaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my diſciple.* We are told, *that when the chief prieſts and phariſees heard our Saviour's parables, they perceived that he ſpoke of them.* (*b*)

If Chriſtians, hearing the above recited parable, are not prick'd in their hearts, and don't feel that our Saviour ſpeaks of them, it muſt be own'd that they are more

(*a*) Luke xiv. 16. (*b*) Mat. xxi. 45.

more harden'd than *Jews*, and more insincere than *Pharisees*.

This parable teaches us, that not only the vices, the wickedness and vanity of this world, but even its most lawful and allow'd concerns, may render men unable to enter, and unworthy to be received into the true state of Christianity.

That he, who is over busied in an honest and lawful calling, may on that account be as well rejected by God, as he who is vainly employ'd in foolish and idle pursuits.

For let religion determine the point, and what can it signify, whether a man forgets God in his *farm*, or a *shop*, or at a *gaming table?* For the world is full as great and important in its *pleasures*, as in its *cares*; there is no more wisdom in the one, than in the other; and the Christian that is govern'd by either, and made less affected to the things of God by them, is equally odious and contemptible in the sight of God.

And tho' we distinguish betwixt *cares* and *pleasures*, yet if we would speak exactly, it is pleasure alone that governs and moves us in every state of life. And the man, who in the business of the world would be thought to pursue it, because of its use and importance, is as much govern'd by his temper and taste for pleasures, as he who studies the gratification of his *palate*, or takes his delight in running *foxes* and *hares* out of breath.

For there is no wisdom or reason in any thing but religion, nor is any way of life less vain than another, but as it is made serviceable to piety, and conspires with the designs of religion, to raise mankind to a participation and enjoyment of the divine Nature.

Therefore does our Saviour equally call men from the *cares* of employments, as from the *pleasures* of their senses; because they are equally wrong turns of mind, equally nourish the corruption of our nature, and are equally *nothing* when compared to that high state of glory, which by his sufferings and death he has merited for us.

Perhaps Christians, who are not at all asham'd to be

be devoted to the cares and buſineſs of the world, cannot better perceive the weakneſs and folly of their deſigns, than by comparing them with ſuch ſtates of life, as they own to be vain and fooliſh, and contrary to the temper of religion.

Some people have no other care, than how to give their *palate* ſome freſh pleaſure, and enlarge the happineſs of *taſting*. I deſire to know now wherein conſiſts the ſin or baſeneſs of this care?

Others live to no other purpoſe, than to breed *dogs*, and attend the ſports of the field.

Others think all their time dull and heavy, which is not ſpent in the pleaſures and diverſions of the town.

Men of ſober buſineſs, who ſeem to act the grave part of life, generally condemn theſe ways of life.

Now I deſire to know upon what account they are to be condemned? For produce the true reaſon, why any of theſe ways of life are vain and ſinful, and the ſame reaſon will conclude with the ſame ſtrength againſt every ſtate of life, but that which is devoted to God.

Let the ambitious man ſhew the folly and irregularity of *covetouſneſs*, and the ſame reaſons will ſhew the folly and irregularity of *ambition*.

Let the man, who is deep in worldly buſineſs, ſhew the vanity and ſhame of a life that is devoted to *pleaſures*, and the ſame reaſons will as fully ſet forth the vanity and ſhame of worldly *cares*. So that whoever can condemn ſenſuality, ambition, or any way of life, upon the principles of reaſon and religion, carries his own condemnation within his own breaſt, and is that very perſon which he deſpiſes, unleſs his life be devoted to God.

For worldly cares are no more holy or virtuous, than worldly pleaſures; they are as great a miſtake in life, and when they equally divide or poſſeſs the heart, are equally vain and ſhameful, as any ſenſual gratifications.

It is granted that ſome cares are made neceſſary by the neceſſities of nature; and are great duties of Religion; and the ſame alſo may be obſerv'd of ſome pleaſures; the pleaſures of eating, drinking, and reſt, are

equally

equally neceſſary; but yet if reaſon and religion
not limit theſe pleaſures by the neceſſities of natur
we fall from rational creatures, into drones, ſots, glu
tons, and Epicures.

In the ſame manner our care after ſome world
things is neceſſary; but if this care is not bounded b
the juſt wants of nature; if it wanders into unneceſſ
ry purſuits, and fills the mind with falſe deſires a
cravings; if it wants to add an imaginary ſplendor
the plain demands of nature, it is vain and irregula
it is the care of the *Epicure*, a longing for *ſauces* a
ragous, and corrupts the ſoul like any other ſenſual i
dulgence.

For this reaſon our Lord points his doctrines at t
moſt common and allow'd employments of life,
teach us, that they may employ our minds as falſe
and diſtract us as far from our true good, as any trif
and vanity.

He calls us from ſuch cares, to convince us, th
even the neceſſities of life muſt be ſought with a ki
of indifference, that ſo our ſouls may be truly ſenſib
of greater wants, and diſpos'd to hunger and thirſt a
ter enjoyments that will make us happy for ever.

But how unlike are Chriſtians to Chriſtianity!
commands us *to take no thought, ſaying, What ſhall w
eat, or what ſhall we drink?* yet Chriſtians are reſtle
and laborious till they can eat in *plate*.

It commands us to be indifferent about raiment; b
Chriſtians are full of care and concern to be cloathed
purple and fine linen: it enjoins us to take no thoug
for the morrow; yet Chriſtians think they have liv
in vain, if they don't leave eſtates at their death. Y
theſe are the diſciples of that Lord, who ſaith, *Whoſ
ever he be of you, that forſaketh not all that he hath,*
cannot be my diſciple.

It muſt not be ſaid, that there is ſome defect in the
doctrines, or that they are not plainly enough taug
in ſcripture, becauſe the lives and behaviour of Chriſt
ans are ſo contrary to them; for if the ſpirit of t
world, and the temper of Chriſtians, might be a
ledg

dg'd againſt the doctrines of ſcripture, none of them would have laſted to this day.

It is one of the ten commandments, *Thou ſhalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain*; our Saviour has in the moſt ſolemn manner forbid ſwearing; yet where is there more ſwearing than amongſt Chriſtians, and amongſt ſuch Chriſtians as would think it hard to be reckon'd a reproach to the Chriſtian name?

The Scripture ſays of Chriſtians, that they are born of God, *and have overcome the world*; can they be reckon'd of that number, who have not ſo much as overcome this flagrant ſin, and to which they have no temptation in nature?

Well therefore may the doctrines of humility, heavenly-mindedneſs, and contempt of the world, be diſregarded, ſince they have all the corruptions of fleſh and blood, all the innate and acquir'd pride and vanity of our nature to conquer, before they can be admitted.

To proceed:

I know it is pretended by ſome, that theſe doctrines of our Saviour, concerning *forſaking all*, and the like, related only to his firſt followers, who could be his diſciples upon no other terms, and who were to ſuffer with him for the propagation of the goſpel.

It is readily own'd, that there are different ſtates of the Church, and that ſuch different ſtates may call Chriſtians to ſome particular duties, not common to every age.

It is own'd alſo, that this was the caſe of the firſt Chriſtians; they differ'd from us in many reſpects.

They were perſonally call'd to follow Chriſt; they receiv'd particular commiſſions from his mouth; they were impower'd to work miracles, and called to a certain expectation of hatred and ſufferings from almoſt all the world.

Theſe are particulars in which the ſtate of the firſt church differed from the preſent.

But then it is careſully to be obſerv'd, that this difference in the *ſtate* of the church, is a difference in the *external ſtate* of the church, and not in the internal *inward*

ward ſtate of Chriſtians. It is a difference that relates to the affairs and *condition* of the world, and not to the *perſonal holineſs* and, purity of Chriſtians.

The world may ſometimes favour Chriſtianity, at other times it may oppoſe it with perſecution; now this change of the world makes two different ſtates of the church, but without making any difference in the inward perſonal holineſs of Chriſtians, which is to be always the ſame, whether the world ſmiles or frowns upon it.

Whatever degrees therefore of perſonal holineſs or inward perfection was requir'd of the firſt followers of Chriſt, is ſtill in the ſame degree, and for the ſame reaſons, requir'd of all Chriſtians to the end of the world.

Humility, meekneſs, heavenly affection, devotion, charity, and a contempt of the world, are all *internal qualities* of perſonal holineſs; they conſtitute that ſpirit and temper of religion, which is requir'd for its own excellence, and is therefore of conſtant and eternal obligation. There is always the ſame fitneſs and reaſonableneſs in them, the ſame perfection in practiſing of them, and the ſame rewards always due to them.

We muſt therefore look carefully into the nature of the things which we find were requir'd of the firſt Chriſtians; if we find that they were call'd to ſufferings from other people, this may perhaps not be our caſe; but if we ſee they are call'd to ſufferings from themſelves, to *voluntary ſelf-denials*, and renouncing their own rights, we may judge amiſs, if we think this was their particular duty as the firſt diſciples of Chriſt.

For it is undeniable, that theſe inſtances of making themſelves ſufferers from themſelves, of voluntary ſelf-denial, and renunciation of ſome worldly enjoyments, are as truly parts of perſonal holineſs and devotion to God, as any inſtances of charity, humility, and love of God, that can poſſibly be ſuppos'd.

And it will be difficult to ſhew, why all Chriſtians are now oblig'd, in imitation of Chriſt, to be *meek and lowly in heart*; if they, like the firſt Chriſtians, are not

oblig'd

oblig'd to theſe inſtances of lowlineſs and meekneſs; or if they are oblig'd ſtill to imitate Chriſt, how they can be ſaid to do it, if they excuſe themſelves from theſe plain and requir'd ways of ſhewing it.

Let us therefore not deceive ourſelves; the goſpel preaches the *ſame* doctrines to us, that our Saviour taught his firſt diſciples; and tho' it may not call us to the ſame *external* ſtate of the church, yet it infallibly calls us to the ſame *inward* ſtate of holineſs and newneſs of life.

If therefore we are not obliged to be like them in theſe reſpects; if we may be leſs holy and heavenly in our tempers; if we need not act upon ſuch high principles of devotion to God, and diſregard of earthly goods, as they did, we muſt preach a *new goſpel* of our own; we muſt ſay, that we need not be *meek and lowly* as the firſt Chriſtians were; and that thoſe high doctrines of charity, of bleſſing and doing good to our worſt enemies, were duties only for the firſt ſtate of the church.

All our Saviour's divine ſermon upon the *Mount*, may as well be confin'd to his firſt diſciples, as theſe doctrines; and it is as ſound in divinity, as well founded in reaſon, to aſſert, that our Saviour had only regard to his firſt diſciples, when he ſaid, *Ye cannot ſerve God and mammon*, as when he ſaith, *whoſoever he be of you that forſaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my diſciple*.

For let any one think, if he can find the leaſt ſhadow of a reaſon, why Chriſtians ſhould at firſt be call'd to higher degrees of heavenly affection, devotion, to God, and diſregard of the world, than they are now.

It will be as eaſy to ſhew that they were obliged to a *ſtronger* faith, a *more lively* hope than we are now.

All men will readily grant, that it would be very abſurd, to ſuppoſe, that more *articles of faith* ſhould have been neceſſary to be believ'd by our Saviour's firſt followers, than by Chriſtians of after-ages.

Let it then be conſider'd, why this would be abſurd and it will plainly appear, that the ſame reaſon, which makes it abſurd to ſuppoſe that any thing which was

once

once neceſſary to be *believ'd*, ſhould ever loſe that neceſſity, will equally ſhew, that it is alike abſurd to ſuppoſe, that any thing that was once neceſſary to be *done* ſhould ever be lawful to be left *undone*.

I believe all men will readily grant, that whenever the church falls into ſuch a ſtate of perſecution as was in the beginning, that we are then to ſuffer for the faith as the firſt Chriſtians did.

Now I aſk, why we are to do as they did, when we fall into the like circumſtances?

Is it becauſe what they did was right and fit to be done? Is it becauſe their example is ſafe and agreeable to the doctrines of Chriſt? Is it becauſe we muſt value our lives at no higher a rate than they valued theirs? Is it becauſe ſuffering for the faith, is always that ſame excellent temper, and always entitled to the ſame reward?

If theſe are the reaſons, as undoubtedly they are, why we muſt ſuffer as they did, if we fall into ſuch a ſtate of the church as they were in; do not all the ſame reaſons equally prove that we muſt *uſe* the world as they did, becauſe we are in the *ſame* world that they were in?

If it can be ſhewn, that the world is changed; that its enjoyments have not that contrariety to the ſpirit of Chriſtianity that they had in the apoſtles days, there may be ſome grounds for us Chriſtians to take other methods than they did. But if the world is the *ſame enemy* it was at the firſt; if its *wiſdom* is ſtill *fooliſhneſs*; its *friendſhip* ſtill *enmity with God*; we are as much obliged to treat this enemy as the firſt diſciples of Chriſt did, as we are obliged to imitate their behaviour towards any other enemies and perſecutors of the common Chriſtianity.

And it would be very abſurd to ſuppoſe, that we were to follow the doctrines of Chriſt in renouncing the *fleſh* and the *devil*; but might abate of their enmity in regard to the *world*, when it is by our uſe of worldly goods, that both the *fleſh* and the *devil* gain almoſt all their power over us.

It

It is written, *Whoſoever he be of you that forſaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my diſciple.*

St. *Mark* tells us, *There came one running, and kneeled to him, and aſked him, good maſter, what ſhall I do that I may inherit eternal life? And Jeſus ſaid unto him, Thou knoweſt the commandments, do not commit adultery, do not kill, do not ſteal, do not bear falſe witneſs, defraud not, honour thy father and mother* (*a*).

And he anſwer'd and ſaid unto him, Maſter, all theſe have I obſerved from my youth.

Then Jeſus beholding him, loved him, and ſaid unto him, One thing thou lackeſt, go thy way and ſell whatſoever thou haſt, and give to the poor, and thou ſhalt have treaſure in heaven, and come take up the croſs and follow me.

And he was ſad at that ſaying, and went away grieved, for he had great poſſeſſions.

In St. *Matthew* it is thus, *If thou wilt be perfect, go and ſell that that thou haſt, &c.*

Some have imagin'd, that from our Saviour's uſing the expreſſion, *If thou wilt be perfect*, that this was only a condition of ſome high uncommon perfection, which Chriſtians, as ſuch, were not obliged to aſpire after; but the wickedneſs of this imagination will ſoon appear, if it be conſider'd, that the young man's queſtion plainly ſhew'd what perfection it was that he aim'd at; he only aſk'd what he ſhould do that he might *inherit eternal life*: and it was in anſwer to this queſtion, that our Saviour told him, that tho' he had kept the commandments, yet one thing he lack'd.

So that when our Saviour ſaith, *If thou wilt be perfect*, it is the ſame thing as when he ſaid, If thou wilt not be lacking in one thing, that is, if thou wilt practiſe all that duty which will make thee inherit eternal life, thou muſt not only keep the commandments, *but ſell all that thou haſt and give to the poor.*

Now can it be imagined, that our Saviour would make ſalvation more difficult to one who was thus diſpoſed, than to others?

That he would impoſe particularly hard terms upon one whoſe virtues had already gain'd his *love?*

(*a*) Chap. x. 17.

And ſuch hard terms, as for their difficulty might juſtly be compared to a *camel*'s going through the eye of a *needle*. Would he make him lacking in one thing, which other men might lack in all ages without any hindrance of their ſalvation? Would he ſend him away ſorrowful on the account of ſuch terms, as are no longer terms to the Chriſtian world?

As this cannot be ſuppoſed, we muſt allow, that what our Saviour requir'd of that young man, was not upon any *particular* account, or to ſhew his *authority* of demanding what he pleaſed; but that he required this of the young man for the ſake of the *excellency* of the duty, becauſe it was a temper *neceſſary* for Chriſtianity, and always to be required of all Chriſtians: it being as eaſy to conceive, that our Saviour ſhould allow of leſs *reſtitution* and *repentance* in ſome ſinners than in others, as that he ſhould make more denial of the world, more affection for heaven, neceſſary to ſome, than to others.

I ſuppoſe it cannot be denied, that an obedience to this doctrine had ſhewn an excellent temper; that it was one of the moſt noble virtues of the ſoul; that it was a *right* judgment of the vanity of earthly riches; that it was a *right* judgment of the value of heavenly treaſures.

Conſider, whether, if an *Apoſtle* was to riſe from the dead, calling *all* rich men to this doctrine, they would not drive their coaches from ſuch a preacher, rather than be ſaved at ſuch a price.

If this ſelling, this renunciation of worldly wealth, was not required for the excellency of the duty, and its ſuitableneſs to the ſpirit of Chriſtianity, it will be hard to ſhew a reaſon, why ſuch ſelf-denial, ſuch renunciation of one's own enjoyments, ſuch perſecution of one's ſelf, ſhould be required at a time when Chriſtianity expoſed its members to ſuch uncommon hatred and perſecution from other people.

Our Saviour allowed his diſciples, when they ſhould fall under perſecution, to flee from one city to another; tho' they were to be as harmleſs as *doves*, yet he commanded them to be as *wiſe* as *ſerpents*.

If

If therefore the enjoyment of riches had been a thing that had ſuited with his religion; was not a renunciation of all worldly wealth, a temper neceſſary, and never to be diſpenſed with; one would ſuppoſe, that it would leaſt of all have been impoſed, at a time when there were ſo many other unavoidable burdens to be undergone.

Since therefore this forſaking and renouncing all by our own act and deed; ſince this degree of ſelf-denial and ſelf-perſecution was commanded at a time when all the world were enemies to Chriſtians; ſince they were not then ſpared or indulged in any pleaſurable enjoyments of their worldly wealth, but were to add this inſtance of ſuffering to all the ſufferings from their enemies; we may be ſure that it was required becauſe it was a *neceſſary* duty; becauſe it was a proper behaviour of ſuch as were *born of God*, and made *heirs* of eternal glory.

If this be true; then it muſt be own'd, that it is ſtill the ſame *neceſſary* duty, and is now as well that proper behaviour of thoſe who are ſons of God, as ever it was.

For Chriſtianity is juſt that ſame ſpiritual heavenly ſtate that it was then; the dignity of Chriſtians has ſuffered no alteration ſince that time, and a treaſure in heaven, an eternal happineſs, are ſtill the ſame great and important things.

CHAP. IV.

ANY one that is at all acquainted with ſcripture, muſt obſerve, that the doctrine of the foregoing chapter is not barely founded on thoſe particular texts there conſidered; but that the ſpirit of renouncing the world, is the moſt common and repeated ſubject of our Saviour's heavenly inſtructions.

A certain man ſaid unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whither ſoever thou goeſt. And Jeſus ſaid unto him, the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have neſts, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head (*a*).

(*a*) Luke ix. 57, 58.

Another alſo ſaid, Lord, I will follow thee, but let me firſt go bid them farewell that are at home at my houſe.

And Jeſus ſaid unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

Theſe paſſages are all of a kind with what our Saviour ſaid to the young man; they directly teach that ſame renunciation of the world, as the firſt and principal temper, the very ſoul and eſſence of Chriſtianity.

This doctrine is preſs'd and urged upon us by various ways, by every art of teaching, that it might enter into the heart of every reader.

The kingdom of God, ſaith our Saviour, *is like unto a merchant-man ſeeking goodly pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, he went and ſold all that he had, and bought it* (*a*).

The doctrine of this parable needs no interpretation; it is plain and ſtrong, and preſſes home the advice that our Saviour gave to the rich young man.

When it ſays, that the kingdom of God *is a pearl of great price*, I ſuppoſe it means, that a great deal is to be given for it; and when it ſays, that the merchant went and ſold *all* that he had, and bought it, I ſuppoſe this is to teach us, that it cannot be bought at any *leſs* price.

The modern *Jews* would be upon much eaſier terms than thoſe who lived in our Saviour's days, if we can now tell them that the kingdom of God is no longer like *one pearl of great price*, and that they need not ſell *all* that they have, and buy it; but may go on ſeeking pearls as they uſe to do, and yet be good members of the kingdom of God.

Now if we may not preach ſuch a *new* goſpel as this to the preſent *Jews*, I don't know how we can preach it to Chriſtians.

This parable does not ſuppoſe, that the merchant went to trading again, after he had ſold *all*, and bought this pearl of great price. He was content with that, and did not want any other riches.

To proceed: The peaceful, pleaſurable enjoyments of

(*a*) Matth. xiii. 45.

of riches, is a ſtate of life every-where condemned by our bleſſed Saviour.

Woe unto you that are full, for ye ſhall hunger; woe unto you that laugh now, for ye ſhall weep and mourn (*a*).

If we can think, that for all this the joy of proſperity, and the gay pleaſures of plenty, are the allowed firſt wiſhes of Chriſtians, we muſt have done wondering at the blindneſs and hardneſs of the *Jews* hearts.

Woe unto you that are rich, for ye have received your conſolation! It is not ſaid, woe unto you that are rich, for ye have enriched yourſelves by *evil* arts and unlawful means.

This ſame doctrine is preſs'd upon us by a remarkable parable, ſo plain and lively, that one would think that every Chriſtian that has heard it, ſhould be afraid of every thing that looks like ſelf-indulgence, or expence in his own pleaſures and pride.

There was a certain rich man, which was cloathed in purple and fine linen, and fared ſumptuouſly every day.

And there was a certain poor beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate full of ſores, and deſiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table; moreover the dogs came and licked his ſores.

It came to paſs, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's boſom. The rich man alſo died, and was buried, and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and ſeeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his boſom (*b*).

This parable teacheth the danger of living in the uſual delights of a great fortune, the parable condemneth. Here no injuſtice, no villanies or extortions; it is only a life of ſplendor and indulgence, that leaves him in hell.

This we are further taught by *Abraham*'s anſwer to him, *Son, remember that thou in thy life-time receiveds't thy good things:* this is alledged as the ſole reaſon of his being in torments.

It is to be obſerved, that nothing is mentioned of *Lazarus*, but his low and afflicted ſtate; and then it is, *he is comforted, and thou art tormented.*

(*a*) Luke vi. 25. (*b*) Luke xvi.

Can any thing more plainly ſhew us the impoſſibility of enjoying *mammon* while we live, and God when we die? A rich man, enjoying the pleaſures of riches, is for that reaſon found in torments; a beggar, patiently bearing want, is for that reaſon made the care of angels, and conducted to *Abraham*'s boſom.

Does not this manifeſtly teach us that ſame renunciation of worldly enjoyments, as if we had been expreſly required to part with all that we have?

For, if a life of ſplendor, and pleaſure, and ſenſual gratifications, is the portion of thoſe who chuſe to enjoy it; if it expoſes us to ſo much *woe* and wrath hereafter, well might our bleſſed Saviour tell the rich man, that he lacked *one thing*, that he was to *ſell all* that he had, and give to the poor.

If therefore this parable contains the doctrine that it firſt taught, if time has not worn away its meaning; it contains a doctrine that concerns *all* rich men; it ſpeaks as home to them, and calls as loudly for a renunciation of worldly indulgences, as our Saviour did to the rich man.

So that there is no advantage got by conſidering our Saviour's command, as a *particular* charge, and given to a particular young man; ſince it appears by other expreſs paſſages and parables, that the *ſame* is required of all other rich men, as they expect any other conſolation, than what is to be found in riches.

If we will here alſo appropriate this parable to this particular rich man, we ſhall judge as reaſonably, as if we ſhould maintain, that the *hell*, in which he was tormented, was made only for him, and is a ſtate which no one elſe has any occaſion to fear.

We muſt therefore, unleſs we will ſet aſide the goſpel, and think ourſelves not concerned in its doctrines, take this as an undeniable truth, that Chriſtianity is ſtill that ſame oppoſite ſtate to the world that it was in our Saviour's days; that he ſpeaks to us the ſame language that he ſpoke to the young man in the goſpel; that if we will not hear his voice, but indulge ourſelves in the proud ſenſual delights of riches and grandeur, our fate is taught us in the rich man in torments, and

to us belongs that dreadful threatning, *Woe unto you that are rich, for you have received your conſolation.*

This abſurdity is enough to expoſe any pretended neceſſity of this interpretation; which abſurdity muſt be granted, if we ſay, that this new interpretation is more ſuitable to the ſpirit of Chriſtianity, than to take the words as ſtill obliging in their firſt ſenſe.

But to cut off all pretence of any neceſſity from any other part of ſcripture, I have made it plainly appear, that the ſame doctrine is certainly taught by many other expreſs paſſages of ſcripture.

This interpretation therefore is as contrary to many other parts of ſcripture, as to this text; it is contrary to the ſpirit of Chriſtianity, and is only brought in to ſoften the rigours of religion, that people may, with quiet conſciences, enjoy the pleaſures of plenty, and thoſe who want it, ſpend their time in the ways and means of acquiring it.

If therefore there be not an *entire change* in the way to heaven; if the once *ſtreight gate* be not now a wide and open paſſage to all full, fat, and ſtately Chriſtians; if there is ſtill any meaning in theſe words, *Bleſſed are the poor in ſpirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God*, the ſober Chriſtian may as well doubt of this allowance of enjoying the pleaſures and plenty of his eſtate, till perſecution for the faith drives him out of it, as if he was told, that he need not *reſiſt* the devil, till ſuch time as he tempted him to *deny* the faith, or give up ſome truth of his religion.

When our Saviour gave this command to the young man, and afterwards obſerved upon his refuſal, that it was eaſier for a *camel* to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God, the apoſtles took that command to ſignify the common conditions of entering into Chriſtianity, and immediately declared that they had *left all and followed him.*

And our Saviour anſwered them in ſuch a manner, as ſhewed, that the doctrine then delivered related to all mankind in the ſame ſenſe, and had nothing parti-

cular in it that related to one man, or one age of the church, more than another.

Verily I ſay unto you, there is no man that hath left houſe, or brethren, or ſiſters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my ſake or the goſpel's, but he ſhall have an hundred-fold now in this preſent time, and in the world to come eternal life (*a*).

Let it now be conſidered, that ſuppoſing it was barely lawful to enjoy our eſtates; and, as the world ſays, live up to them; is this a ſtate of any merit? is there any reward annexed to it? if it is not our ſin, it is at beſt a loſing our time, and as unrewardable as ſleeping.

But on the other ſide we are infallibly aſſured, that if we come up to the doctrine of the text, if we part with our worldly enjoyments and gratifications for the ſake of Chriſt, that in this life we ſhall receive an *hundred-fold*, and in the world to come eternal life.

Now, if ſuch perſons as theſe are to be thus bleſſed in this life, and alſo ſo rewarded in the next; it is certain that they, who are not ſuch perſons, will not be ſo doubly bleſſed both in this life and that which is to come.

But now what an interpretation muſt that be, which leads men from being an *hundred* times as happy as they might be in this life, and from ſuch an height of reward in the next?

Is not this enough to ſhew us, that the wiſdom of this interpretation is not a wiſdom from above, that it ſavoureth not the things that be of God?

For who can be ſo wiſe unto eternal life, who can make ſo much of his plenty, as by thus parting with it?

Who, that was governed by a wiſdom from above, would ſeek for an evaſion, where the open ſenſe is not only ſafe, but entitled to ſo vaſt a recompence, both now and hereafter?

It is to me no ſmall argument, that our Saviour meant no ſuch allowance, as this interpretation has found out; becauſe it is ſo contrary to the perfection of the ſoul, and is ſo diſadvantagous to thoſe that follow it.

Our

(*a*) Mark x. 29.

Our bleſſed Saviour and his apoſtles both in doctrine and practice are on the ſide of renouncing the enjoyments of riches, and who is he that dare preach up a worldly peace and indulgence, without either text or precedent from ſcripture, and ſuch a peace as leads men from ſuch high rewards both in this life, and that which is to come?

When our Saviour told *Peter* of his ſufferings, *Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, ſaying, Be it far from thee, Lord, this ſhall not be unto thee. But Jeſus turned, and ſaid to Peter, get thee behind me Satan, thou art an offence unto me, for thou ſavoureſt not the things that be of God, but thoſe that be of men.*

But after all, this enjoyment of worldly riches which this interpretation pleads for, cannot be ſhewn to be barely lawful; this, I ſay, cannot be ſhewn, without ſhewing at the ſame time, that this paſſage, *It is eaſier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God*, is ſo old as to be of no ſignificancy now; for if the difficulty ſtill continues, the rich man muſt have as much to part with now, as he had then.

The ſame muſt be ſaid of all thoſe other paſſages above-mentioned, concerning the kingdom being compared to *one great pearl*, the caſe of the *rich* man in torments, and the general *woe* that is denounced againſt ſuch as are rich, as having received their *conſolation*; all theſe, with a great variety of other texts, muſt have quite loſt their firſt natural meaning, if this interpretation be admitted as barely lawful.

So that it is an interpretation, that runs away from the plain open ſenſe of the words, and leads from thoſe great rewards that belong to it; it is an interpretation made without any neceſſity, not ſupported by any doctrine or practice of ſcripture, contrary to the practices of the firſt Chriſtians, contrary to the heavenly ſpirit of our religion, and ſo contrary to various plain paſſages of ſcripture, that they muſt have loſt their true meaning, if this interpretation be admitted.

Laſtly, If all that can be concluded from this command of our Saviour, is only this, that we are obliged

to part with our eſtates when we cannot keep them, without ſelling the truth; if *ſell all thou haſt, and give to the poor, and thou ſhalt have treaſure in heaven*, only means, when applied to us, *thou mayeſt keep and enjoy thy eſtate, till ſome wicked terms of keeping it are impoſed upon thee*; this is no higher a perfection, no greater degree of heavenly-mindedneſs or diſregard to the world, than a *Jew* or honeſt *Heathen* would maintain.

For, who does not know that it is better to be *juſt* and *faithful*, than to be *rich*; and that a man is rather to part with his eſtate, than to keep it at the expence of his virtue and integrity? this is only the virtue of chuſing rather to be poor, than a thief.

But if Chriſtians can think that this is the higheſt renunciation of the world, the higheſt degree of heavenly affection to which they are called; if they can think, that this is all that is meant by their being *crucified* and *dead* to the world, by their being in Chriſt *new creatures*, by their being *born of God, and having overcome the world*, they may be juſtly ſaid to treat the ſcriptures, as the *Jews* treated our Saviour, when they ſaid, *We will not have this man to reign over us.*

I have, I think, ſufficiently ſhewn, that our Saviour required an entire renunciation of the world, a forſaking all its enjoyments, in order to be his true diſciples; and that the ſame is as certainly required of us, as he is the ſame Chriſt, and we heirs of the ſame glory.

It will now therefore, I know, be aſked, whether all Chriſtians are obliged to *ſell* their eſtates, and give to the poor, in order to inherit eternal life?

The abſurdity and ridiculouſneſs of ſuch a thing, and the diſorder it muſt occaſion in life, will be thought ſufficient to expoſe and confute all the foregoing doctrine.

The heart devoted to God, hath ſold all it had and given it the poor, for in that caſe all that it ſpendeth or ſpareth is for the Glory of God, being conformable to what he commandeth or alloweth of. We are aſſured by God himſelf, that the *wiſdom* of this world is *fooliſhneſs* with God, and that the ſpirit of Chriſtianity, and the ſpirit of the world, are as contrary to one another, as the kingdom of light, and the kingdom of darkneſs.

What

What can be more contrary to worldly greatneſs and wiſdom, than the doctrine of the *croſs*, which way could any one expoſe himſelf to more jeſt and ridicule, than by being too meek and humble to reſent an affront, and accept a *challenge?*

Not only *rakes* and *libertines*, but the grave, the religious part of the world, talk of the neceſſity of defending their honour, and reckon it a ſhame not to reſent and fight when the affront is given.

This makes the ſpirit of the world; tho' it be as conſiſtent with our religion to honour the memory of *Cain* for killing his brother, as to make it a part of honour to give or accept a *Challenge.*

This may ſerve to ſhew us, that we muſt diſregard the maxims and wiſdom of this world, and not form our judgments of Chriſtian virtues with any regard to it; ſince by it, patience and meekneſs may be reckoned ſhameful, and revenge and murder as inſtances of honour.

But I give now a direct anſwer to the foregoing queſtion.

Our Saviour bid the young gentleman in the goſpel ſell all that he had, and give to the poor, that he might have treaſure in heaven; that is, he required him to renounce the ſelf-enjoyment of his eſtate to live no longer in the gratifications of his plenty, but offer it to God in works of charity and relief of others.

Now the *ſelling all* is only a circumſtance of parting with the enjoyment of his riches from himſelf, to all ſuch objects and uſes as are worthy of it in the ſight of God.

I take it to be the ſame in the caſe before us. It is not neceſſary that a man ſhould *ſell all* that he hath, becauſe that was the expreſſion uſed to the young man; but it is neceſſary that he comply with the *thing* ſignified, and practiſe all that diſregard of the world, and heavenly affection, which is there taught.

He ſufficiently ſelleth all, who parteth with the guilty ſelf-enjoyment of it, and maketh it the ſupport of thoſe that want it.

This ſeems to me to be the true and plain meaning

of

of the paſſage. The words *ſell all*, are only uſed as a *form of ſpeech*, as a general way of expreſſing the parting with the enjoyment of an eſtate, as *ſackcloth and aſhes* were a general way of expreſſing repentance; and not as laying any direct obligation of parting with an eſtate in that *particular* way, any more than *ſackcloth* is always neceſſary to a true repentance.

When our Saviour related the good *Samaritan*'s charity, and ſaid unto the man that talked with him, *Go and do thou likewiſe*; he is not exhorted to ſtay for an opportunity of doing the ſame action, but to do the ſame thing which was implied by that action.

Are not humility and meekneſs to be practiſed in the *ſame fulneſs* that they were in our Saviour's time? But if they are, it will be impoſſible to ſhew, why any other virtues ſhould admit of any abatements.

Or can any one ſhew a better inſtance of humility and meekneſs, than in departing from the ſplendid enjoyments of his fortune, to make it the ſupport and relief of poor and diſtreſſed people. It ought alſo to be conſider'd, whether it is not impoſſible to ſhew that meekneſs and humility which was then requir'd, unleſs he practiſes them in theſe inſtances.

Let it alſo be conſider'd, that this uſe of worldly things is not only commanded, as ſuitable to the graces and virtues of the Chriſtian life; but that the caſe of the *rich* man in torments, with the other paſſages above-mention'd are ſo many expreſs threatnings against our diſobedience.

So that it muſt be affirmed, that we are as much obliged to labour after the ſame degrees of faith, hope, heavenly affection, and diſregard of the world; as after the ſame degrees of humility, charity, and repentance, that ever was requir'd of any Chriſtians.

Let it alſo be conſider'd, that the command of ſelling all, is only particular in the expreſſion; but that the thing requir'd, is the general temper of Chriſtianity; as is expreſſed by being *dead* to the world; having our *converſation* in heaven, being *born of God*, and having *overcome* the world; theſe expreſſions have no proper meaning, if they don't imply all that heavenly affection

ſection, and diſregard of riches, to which our Saviour exhorted the young man.

God forbid, ſaith St. *Paul, that I ſhould glory, ſave in the croſs of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, whereby the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world* (*a*).

Now I deſire to know why any Chriſtian ſhould think it leſs dreadful, not to be crucified and dead to the world, than St. *Paul* thought it? Is not the temper and ſpirit, which the apoſtle ſhews here, as much to be aſpired after, as in any other part of ſcripture?

But can thoſe, who ſpend their eſtates in their own indulgences, who live in the pomp and pleaſures of riches; can they without profaneneſs ſay that of themſelves, which the apoſtle here ſaith of himſelf?

Or, can they be ſaid to have the ſpirit of Chriſt, who are directed by a ſpirit ſo contrary to that of the apoſtle? Yet the ſcripture ſays expreſly, that *if any man hath not the ſpirit of Chriſt, he is none of his.*

Thus we ſee, that this renunciation of the world, which is thought too great an extreme to be taken from the command given to the young man in the goſpel, is the common temper of Chriſtianity, and a doctrine the moſt univerſally taught of any other. It is indeed the heart and ſoul of Chriſtian piety; it is the natural ſoil, the proper ſtock from whence all the graces of a Chriſtian naturally grow forth; it is a diſpoſition of all others the moſt neceſſary and moſt productive of virtue. And if we might now be *more earthly*, than in the days of Chriſt, we muſt of neceſſity be proportionably wanting in all other virtues. For heavenly affection enters ſo far into the being of all Chriſtian virtues, that an abatement in that, is like an alteration in the firſt wheel that gives motion to all the reſt.

I will now appeal to the imagination of the reader.

Let it be ſuppoſed, that rich men are now enjoying their riches and taking all the common uſual delights of plenty; that they are labouring for the meat that periſheth, projecting and contriving ſcenes of pleaſure, and ſpending their eſtates in proud expences.

After

(*a*) Gal. vi. 14.

After this ſuppoſition, let it be imagined, that we ſaw Jeſus, who had not where to lay his head, with his twelve apoſtles, that had left all to follow him: let us imagine that we heard him call all the world to take up the *croſs* and follow him, promiſing a *treaſure in heaven*, to ſuch as would quit all for his ſake, and rejecting all that would not comply with ſuch terms; denouncing *woe*, and eternal death, to all that lived in fulneſs, pomp, and worldly delights: let it be imagin'd, that we heard him commanding his diſciples to take no thought, ſaying, what ſhall we eat, or what ſhall we drink, or wherewithal ſhall we be cloathed? and giving this reaſon for it, becauſe *after all theſe things do the Gentiles ſeek.*

Let it be imagin'd, that we ſaw the firſt Chriſtians taking up the croſs, renouncing the world, and counting all but dung, that they might gain Chriſt.

I do not now appeal to the *judgment* or *reaſon* of the reader; I leave it with his *imagination*, that wild faculty, to determine, whether it be poſſible for theſe two different ſorts of men to be true diſciples of the ſame Lord.

To proceed:

Let us ſuppoſe, that a rich man was to put up ſuch a prayer as this to God;

" O Lord, I thy ſinful creature, who am born again " to a lively hope of glory in Chriſt Jeſus, beg of " thee, to grant me a *thouſand* times more riches than " I *need*, that I may be able to gratify myſelf and fa- " mily in the delights of eating and drinking, ſtate " and grandeur; grant, that as the little ſpan of life " wears out, I may ſtill abound more and more in " wealth; and that I may ſee and perceive all the beſt " and ſureſt ways of growing richer than any of my " neighbours; this I humbly and fervently beg in the " name, *&c.*

Such a prayer as this ſhould have had no place in this treatiſe; but that I have reaſon to hope, that, in proportion as it offends the *ear*, it will amend the *heart.*

There is no one, I believe, but would be aſham'd

to

to put up ſuch a prayer as this to God; yet let it be well obſerv'd, that all are of the temper of this prayer, but thoſe who have *overcome* the world.

We need not go amongſt villains, and people of ſcandalous characters, to find out thoſe who deſire a *thouſand* times more than they want; who have an eagerneſs to be every day richer and richer; who catch at all ways of gain that are not ſcandalous; and who hardly think any thing enough, except it equals or exceeds the eſtate of their neighbours.

I beg of ſuch, that they would heartily condemn the profane and unchriſtian ſpirit of the foregoing prayer; and that they would ſatisfy themſelves, that nothing can be more odious and contrary to religion than ſuch petitions.

But then let them be aſſured alſo of this, that the ſame things which make an unchriſtian prayer, make an unchriſtian life.

For the reaſon why theſe things appear ſo odious in a prayer, is becauſe they are ſo contrary to the ſpirit of religion. But is it not as bad to live and act contrary to the ſpirit of religion, as to pray contrary to it?

At leaſt, muſt not that manner of life be very blameable, very contrary to piety, which is ſo ſhocking, when put into the form of a prayer?

But indeed, whatever we may think, as we live, ſo we really pray; for as Chriſt ſaith, *where our treaſure is, there will our heart be alſo*; ſo as the manner of our life is, ſo is our heart alſo; it is continually praying, what our life is acting, tho' not in any expreſs form of words.

To purſue this argument a little; is this prayer too ſhocking? dare we not approach God with ſuch a ſpirit? how dare we then think of approaching him with ſuch a life?

Need we any other conviction, that this manner of life is contrary to the ſpirit of Chriſtianity, than this, that the praying according to it in Chriſt's name, comes near to blaſphemy?

Does not this alſo ſufficiently convince us of the reaſonableneſs of Chriſt's command, to forſake the ful-

fulneſs, the indulgence, and pride of eſtates; ſince it is a ſtate of life, that our reaſon dare not aſk God to give us?

Let it be conſider'd how we ſhould abominate a perſon, whom we knew to uſe ſuch a prayer; and let that teach us how abominable a life, that is like it, muſt make us to appear in the eyes of God, and with this addition of folly joined to it, that we call the prayer *profane*, but think the life, that anſwers to it, to be *Chriſtian*.

Perhaps there cannot be a better way of judging of what manner of ſpirit we are of, than to ſee whether the actions of our life are ſuch, as we may ſafely commend them to God in our prayers.

For it is undeniable, that if they are ſuch as we dare not mention to God in our prayers, we ought in all reaſon to be as fearful of acting them in his preſence.

We may indeed do ſeveral innocent things, which, on account of their littleneſs, are unfit to be put into our devotions; but if the chief and main actions of our life are not ſuch, as we may juſtly beg the aſſiſtance of God's Holy Spirit in the performance of them, we may be aſſur'd, that ſuch actions make our lives as unholy, as ſuch petitions would make our prayers.

From all that has been above obſerved, I think it is ſufficiently plain, that the preſent diſciples of Jeſus Chriſt are to have no more to do with worldly enjoyments, than thoſe that he choſe whilſt he himſelf was on earth; and that he expects as much devotion to God, and heavenly affection, from us, as from any that he converſed with, and ſpeaks the ſame language, and gives the ſame commands to all rich men now, that he gave to the rich young man in the goſpel.

CHAP. V.

THE ſubject of the two preceding chapters is of ſuch importance, that I cannot leave it, without adding ſome farther conſiderations upon it.

For notwithſtanding the ſcriptures are ſo clear and expreſs on the ſide of the doctrine there deliver'd; yet I muſt

I must expect to encounter the prejudices of men, who are ſettled in other opinions.

I know it will ſtill be aſk'd, where can be the impiety of getting or enjoying an eſtate?

Whether it be not honourable, and matter of juſt praiſe, to provide an eſtate for one's family?

It will alſo be aſk'd, what people of *birth* and *fortune* are to do with themſelves, if they are not to live ſuitably to their eſtates and qualities?

Any one that has taken the trouble to read this treatiſe muſt have found, that the doctrine here taught is none of mine; and that therefore I have no occaſion to ſupport it againſt ſuch queſtions as theſe.

The ſame perſons may as well aſk, why the little ſpan of life is made a ſtate of trial and probation, in which men of all conditions are to *work out their ſalvation with fear and trembling*.

But however, to the firſt queſtion let it be anſwer'd. *Take no thought, ſaying, What ſhall we eat, or what ſhall we drink, or wherewithal ſhall we be cloathed; for after all theſe things do the gentiles ſeek.*

If to be careful and thoughtful about the neceſſaries of life, be a care that is here forbidden; and that becauſe it is ſuch a care as only becomes *heathens*; ſurely to be careful and thoughtful how to raiſe an eſtate, and enrich one's family, is a care that is ſufficiently forbidden Chriſtians. And he that can yet think it lawful and creditable to make it the care and deſign of this life to get an eſtate, is too blind to be convinced by arguments. He may, with as much regard to ſcripture ſay, that it is lawful to *ſwear* falſly, tho' it forbids him to *ſpeak* falſly.

Our Saviour ſaith, *Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlaſting life* (*a*). He commands us not to lay up for ourſelves treaſures on earth; he aſſures us that we cannot ſerve God and *mammon*.

Now theſe places have no meaning, if it is ſtill lawful for Chriſtians to heap up treaſures, to labour for great eſtates, and purſue deſigns of enriching their families.

I know

(*a*) John vi. 27.

I know it is eaſy to evade the force of theſe texts, and to make plauſible harangues upon the innocency of labouring to be rich, and the conſiſtency of ſerving God and *mammon*.

I don't queſtion but the rich young man in the goſpel, who had kept the commandments of God from his youth, could have made a very good apology for himſelf, and have ſhewn how reaſonable and innocent a thing it was, for ſo good and ſo young a man to enjoy an eſtate.

The *rich* man in torments could have alledg'd how much good he did with his fortune; how many trades he encourag'd by his *purple* and *fine linen*, and faring *ſumptuouſly* every day, and how he conform'd to the ends and advantages of ſociety by ſo ſpending his eſtate.

But to return: The apoſtle ſaith, *Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content; that they who will be rich fall into a temptation and a ſnare, and into many fooliſh and hurtful luſts, which drown men in deſtruction and perdition* (*a*).

We may perhaps by ſome acuteneſs of reaſoning find out, that this doctrine ſtill leaves us at our liberty, whether we will labour to be rich or not; that notwithſtanding what the apoſtle here ſays of a *ſnare*, a *temptation*, and fooliſh *luſts*; yet that we can purſue the means, and deſire the happineſs of riches, without any danger to our virtue.

But if ſo, we are as prudent as thoſe Chriſtians, who think they can ſecure their virtue without *watching and prayer*, tho' our Saviour has ſaid, *Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.*

He therefore, that neglects watching and prayer, tho' the appointed means of avoiding temptation, may ſhew that he lives as much according to ſcripture, as he that is over-careful and deſirous of riches and wealth, tho' they are the declar'd occaſions of *ſin, ſnares*, and *deſtruction*.

If we will not be ſo humble and teachable, as to conform to ſcripture in the ſimplicity and plainneſs of its

(*a*) 1 Tim. vi. 8.

its doctrines, there will be no end of our errors; but we ſhall be in as much darkneſs, as where the light of ſcripture never appear'd.

For, if we could ſubmit to its plain and repeated doctrines, it would never be aſked, what people of *birth* and *fortune* are to do with themſelves, if they are not to live up to the ſplendor and plenty of their eſtates.

The rich man in the goſpel was a *ruler*, a *young* man, and a *good* man; if therefore there are any amongſt us that are neither young nor good, it can hardly be thought that they have leſs to do to inherit eternal life, than the young man in the goſpel.

And as for thoſe, who, like him, have kept the commandments of God from their youth, I dare not tell them, that they are not under a neceſſity of offering all their wealth to God, and of making their eſtates, however acquir'd, not the ſupport of any fooliſh vain indulgences, but the relief of their brethren.

Suppoſe great people, by means of their wealth, could throw themſelves into a *deep ſleep* of pleaſant dreams, which would laſt till death awaked them, would any one think it lawful for them to make ſuch uſe of their riches?

But if it was aſked, why this is not as lawful as a life of high living, vain indulgences, and worldly pleaſures, it could not be eaſily told.

For ſuch a life as this, is no more like a ſtate of *probation*, than ſuch a *ſleep* is like it; and he that has done nothing but ſleep and dream to the time of his death, may as well ſay, that he has been *working out his ſalvation with fear and trembling*, as he that has been living in ſuch luxury, ſplendor, and vain gratifications, as his eſtate could procure him.

The goſpel has made no proviſion for dignity of *birth*; or difference in *fortune*; but has appointed the ſame *ſtreight gate* the common paſſage for all perſons to enter into glory.

The diſtinctions of civil life have their uſe, and are in ſome degree neceſſary to ſociety; but if any one thinks he may be leſs devoted to God, leſs afraid of the corruptions of pleaſures, the vanities of pride, becauſe

cauſe he was born of one family, rather than another he is as much miſtaken, as he that fancies he has privilege to ſteal, becauſe he was born of a father that was poor.

Why may not poor people give themſelves up to *diſcontent*, to *impatience* and *repining?* Is it not becau Chriſtianity requires the ſame virtues in all ſtates life? Is it not becauſe the rewards of religion are ſuf cient to make us thankful in every condition?

But who ſees not, that theſe ſame reaſons equal condemn the gratifications, the ſenſual indulgences the rich, as the diſcontents and repinings of the poo

So that a great man, taking his ſwing in world pleaſures, in the various gratifications which his plen can furniſh, is as good a Chriſtian, as careful of duty to God, as the poor man who reſigns himſelf to diſcontent, and ſpends his time and ſpirits in reſt cm plaints and repinings.

And if the joys of religion, our hopes in Chriſt, ſufficient to make us rejoice in tribulation, and thankful to God in the hardſhips of poverty; ſurely ſame hopes in Chriſt, muſt be equally ſufficient to m us forbear the luxury and ſoftneſs, and all other pl ſures of imaginary greatneſs.

If therefore the rich or great man can find ou courſe of pleaſures, that ſupport no wrong turn of m a luxury and indulgence, which don't gratify ſenſual delights, and entertainment; which indulge no and weak paſſions; if they can find out ſuch ſelf-enj ments of their riches, as ſhew that they love God all their ſtrength, and their neighbours as themſelv if they can find out ſuch inſtances of ſplendor and gr neſs, as gratify neither the *luſt of the fleſh*, *the luſt of eyes*, *nor the pride of life*, religion has no command gainſt ſuch enjoyments, therefore fine arts, prope applyed, are to be encouraged.

But when this cannot be done, let it be remembe that the rich have no more permiſſion to live in ſen pleaſures and vain indulgences, than the poor hav ſpend their time in anxious complaints and untha ful repinings.

Let it alſo be remember'd, that if any diſtinctions
life make men forget that ſin is their only baſeneſs,
d holineſs their only honour; if any condition makes
m leſs diſpoſed to imitate the low, humble eſtate of
ir ſuffering maſter, or forget that they are to return
God by humiliation, repentance, and ſelf-denial;
ead of being any real advantage, it is their curſe,
r ſnare, and deſtruction.

Was there no ſin in pampering ourſelves with our
es, our Saviour had not ſaid, *Woe unto you that are
, for you have received your conſolation!*

Had a delight in the ſplendor and greatneſs of this
been an innocent delight for people of birth and
une, he had never ſaid, *Bleſſed are the poor in ſpirit,
heirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

Had worldly mirth, and the noiſy joys of ſplendor
equipage, been any part of the happineſs of Chri-
s, he had never ſaid, *Bleſſed are they that mourn,
hey ſhall be comforted.*

Thus does it appear, from almoſt every part of
ture, that a renunciation of the world and worldly
yments, either of pleaſure or pride, is the neceſ-
temper of all Chriſtians of every ſtate and con-
n.

know, that to all this it will ſtill be objected, that
different *ſtates* of life are things *indifferent* in them-
s, and are made good or evil by the tempers of the
ns that enjoy them. That a man is not neceſſarily
and proud, becauſe he lives in great ſhew and
e, any more than another is neceſſarily humble
lowly in mind, becauſe he lives in a low eſtate.

is granted, that men may be of a temper contrary
he ſtate in which they live; but then this is only
of ſuch as are in any ſtate by force, and contrary
eir deſires and endeavours.

man in a low eſtate may be very vain and proud,
uſe he is in ſuch a ſtate by force, and is reſtleſs and
ſy till he can raiſe himſelf out of it. If the ſame
e ſaid of any man that lives in all the ſplendor
figure of life, that he is in it by force, and is reſt-
nd uneaſy till he can lay all aſide, and live in

an

an humble lowly ſtate, it may be granted, that ſuch a man, tho' in the height of figure, may be as humble, as another in ſtarving circumſtances may be proud.

But nothing can be more falſe, than to conclude, that becauſe a man may be in a low eſtate, without having lowlineſs of mind, which eſtate he is in by force, that therefore another may live in all the height of grandeur, the vanity of figure which his fortune will allow, without having any height or vanity of mind, tho' the ſtate of life be according to his mind, and ſuch as he chuſes before another that has leſs of figure and ſhew in it.

Nothing can be more abſurd than ſuch a concluſion as this; it is as if one ſhould ſay, that becauſe a man may be an *Epicure* in his temper, tho' he is forced to live upon bread and water; therefore another, who ſeeks after all ſorts of dainties, and lives upon delicacies out of choice, may be no *Epicure*.

Again, who does not know but a man may give all his goods to feed the poor, and yet want charity? but will any one therefore conclude, that another may keep all his goods to himſelf, and yet have charity?

Yet this is as well argued, as to ſay, that becauſe a man has nothing to ſpend, he may yet be proud; therefore tho' another may lay out his eſtate in vain expences, he may yet have true humility of mind.

For as the man in a low eſtate, would be truly what his eſtate is, if he liked it, and had no deſires that it ſhould be otherwiſe than it is; ſo for the ſame reaſon if thoſe who live in pleaſures, in ſhew and vain expences, live in ſuch a ſtate out of choice, we muſt talk nonſenſe, if we do not ſay, that their minds are as vain as the vanity of their ſtate.

Again, Thoſe who talk of people being humble in a ſtate that has all the appearance of pride and vanity, do not enough conſider the nature of virtue. Humility and every other virtue, is never in a complete ſtate, ſo that a man can ſay, that he has finiſhed his taſk in ſuch or ſuch a virtue.

No virtues have any exiſtence of this kind in human

an minds; they are rather continual ſtruggles with e contrary vices, than any finiſhed habits of mind.

A man is humble, not for what he has already done, t becauſe it is his continual diſpoſition to oppoſe and ject every temptation to pride. Charity is a conti- al ſtruggle with the contrary qualities of ſelf-love nd envy.

And this is the ſtate of every virtue, it is a progreſ- e temper of mind, and always equally labouring to ſerve itſelf.

Thoſe therefore, who ſuppoſe, that people may be finiſhed in the virtue of humility, that they can be ly humble in the enjoyments of ſplendor and vanity, not conſider that humility is never finiſhed, and it ceaſes to exiſt, when it ceaſes to oppoſe and ct every appearance of pride.

This is the true ſtate of every virtue, a reſiſting and poſing all the temptations to the contrary vice.

To ſuppoſe therefore a man ſo truly humble, that may live in all the appearances of pride and vanity, s abſurd as to ſuppoſe a man ſo inwardly ſober, he need refuſe no ſtrong *liquors*, ſo inwardly cha- ble, that he need not avoid quarrels, or ſo holy, he need not reſiſt temptations to ſin.

The neceſſity of renouncing the world in whatever dition of life we are, beſides what appears from icular commands, may be proved from thoſe great ees of holineſs, thoſe divine tempers, which Chri- ity requires.

hriſtians are to love God with *all their heart, with heir ſoul, with all their mind, and with all their gth, and their neighbour as themſelves.*

ow it is abſolutely impoſſible in the nature of the g, that we ſhould practiſe either of theſe duties in Chriſtian ſenſe, unleſs we are ſo born of God, *have overcome the world.*

man that has his head and his heart taken up with dly concerns, can no more love God with all his and with all his ſtrength, than a man, who will his eyes upon the ground, can be looking towards en with all the ſtrength of his ſight.

It is certain in an abſolute degree, that we are as much obliged to renounce the world with all our heart and all our ſtrength, as we are obliged to love God with all our heart and all our ſtrength:

It being as impoſſible to do one without the other, as to exert all our ſtrength two different ways at the ſame time.

It is alſo certain in the ſame abſolute degree, that we unavoidably love every thing, in proportion as it appears to be our happineſs, if it appears to be half of our happineſs, it will neceſſarily have half the ſtrength of our love; and if it appears to be all our happineſs we ſhall naturally love it with all our ſtrength.

What can be more ridiculous than to fancy, that a man, who is labouring after ſchemes of felicity, that is taken up in the enjoyments of the world, is loving God with *all his ſoul* and *all his ſtrength?*

Is it not as abſurd as to ſuppoſe a man that is devoted to the ſports of the field, is at the ſame time contemplating mathematical ſpeculations with all the ardour of his mind?

The love of God, as I have ſaid of every other virtue, is never in any compleat ſtate, but is to preſerve and improve itſelf by a continual oppoſition and reſiſtance of other affections.

It is as neceſſary therefore continually to renounce the world, and all its objects of our affections, in order to form the love of God in our hearts, as it is neceſſary to renounce and reſiſt all motives of ſelf-love and envy, to beget the habit of charity.

And a man may as well pretend, that little envies are conſiſtent with true charity, as that little deſires after the vanities of the world are conſiſtent with an entire love of God with all our hearts.

It may be ſaid, that tho' this appears true in the reaſon of the thing, as conſidered in ſpeculation; yet that this is a love for *angels*, and not ſuited to the ſtate of man.

I anſwer, it is what God has required, and the ſame objection may be made againſt all other Chriſtian virtues, for they are all required in a perfect degree.

Secondly

Secondly, If it is a degree of affection hardly attainable, this makes for the doctrine which I have delivered, and ſhews the abſolute neceſſity of having no more enjoyments in the world, than ſuch as *neceſſity* requires.

For if it is ſo hard to raiſe the ſoul to this degree of love, ſurely it muſt be ſtupid to add to the difficulty by contracting fooliſh and contrary affections.

Thirdly, If this is the proper love of angels, this proves that it is as proper for us, who are taught by God to pray, that his will may be done on earth as it is in heaven.

At leaſt, if this is the love of angels, it ſhews us, that we are to imitate it as far as our nature will allow, and not ſtop at no degrees ſhort of it, but ſuch as we cannot poſſibly reach.

But can he be ſaid to be doing his utmoſt to love like an angel, that is building ſchemes of felicity on earth, and ſeeking ſatisfaction in its imaginary enjoyments?

As ſure therefore as this is the love of angels, as ſure as we are called to an angelical ſtate of life with God; ſo ſurely are we obliged to lay aſide every hinderance, to part with every enjoyment, that may ſtop or retard the ſoul in its riſe and affection towards God.

We differ from angels, as we are in a ſtate of probation, and loaded with fleſh; and tho' till the trial be over, we muſt bear with infirmities and neceſſities, to which they are not ſubject; yet we muſt no more chuſe follies, or find out falſe delights for ourſelves, than if we were, like them, free from all infirmities.

The love of enemies, is ſaid to be a love that becomes the perfection of God; but yet we ſee, that we are ſo far from being excuſed from this manner of love, becauſe it is divine and ſuits the nature of God, that we are for that reaſon expreſly called to it, that we may be *children of our Father which is in heaven.*

If therefore we are called to that ſpirit of love, which becomes the perfection of God, ſurely the manner of angelick love is not too high for us to aſpire after.

All therefore that we are to learn from this matter is this, that a renunciation of the world is neceſſary, that this holy love cannot be attained, unleſs we only uſe the world ſo far as our *needs* and *infirmities* require, and think of no happineſs but what is prepared for us at the right hand of God.

Fourthly, This entire love of God is as poſſible as the attainment of ſeveral other duties, which ſtill are the rules of our behaviour, and ſuch as we are oblig'd to aſpire after in the utmoſt perfection.

The ſincere love of our enemies, is perhaps of all other tempers the hardeſt to be acquired, and the motions of envy and ſpight the moſt difficult to be entirely laid aſide; yet, without this temper, we are unqualified to ſay the Lord's prayer. We ſee examples of this love of God in the firſt followers of our Saviour; and tho' we cannot work miracles as they did, yet we may arrive at their perſonal holineſs, if we would but be ſo humble to imitate their examples.

Our Saviour told them the infallible way of arriving at piety, which was by renouncing the world, and taking up the croſs and following him, that they might have treaſure in heaven. This was the only way then, and it would ſtill be as ſucceſsful now, had we but the faith and humility to put it in practice.

But we are now it ſeems become ſo *wiſe* and *prudent* we ſee ſo much farther into the nature of virtue and vice, than the ſimplicity of the firſt Chriſtians, that we can take all the enjoyments of the world along with us in our road to heaven.

They took Chriſt at his word, and parted with all; but we take upon us to reaſon about the innocency of wealth and ſtately enjoyments, and ſo poſſeſs every thing, but the ſpirit of our religion.

It is ſometimes ſaid in defence of the dulneſs of our affections towards God, that affections are tempers which we cannot command, and depend much upon conſtitution; ſo that perſons, who are poſſeſs'd of a true fear of God, may yet by reaſon of their conſtitution feel leſs vehemency of love, than others who are less pioufly diſpoſed.

T

This is partly true, and partly false.

It is true, that our affections are very much influenc'd by our constitutions; but then it is false, that this is any defence of our want of affection towards God.

Two persons, that equally feel the want of something to quench their thirst, may shew a different passion after water, by a difference in their constitutions; but still, thirst after water is the ruling desire in both of them.

Two *Epicures*, by a difference in their constitutions, may differ in the manner of their eagerness after dainties; but still it is the love of dainties that is the governing love in both of them.

It is the same thing in the case before us; two persons may equally look upon God as their sole happiness; by reason of their different tempers, one may be capable of greater fervours of desire of him than the other, but still it is the ruling desire of the other.

Therefore tho' good men may content themselves, tho' they have not such flames of desire, as they may see or hear of in other people; yet there is no foundation for this content, unless they know that they seek and desire no other happiness than God, and that their love, tho' not so fervent as some others, is still the ruling and governing affection of their soul.

Notwithstanding the difference in constitution, we see all people are affected with what they reckon their happiness: if therefore people are not full of a desire of God, it is because they are full, or at least engaged with another happiness; it is not any slowness of spirits, but a variety of enjoyments, that have taken hold of their hearts, and rendered them insensible of that happiness that is to be found in God.

When any man has followed the counsels of our blessed Saviour, when he has renounced the world, rejected all the flattering appearances of worldly happiness, emptied himself of all idle affections, and practised all the means of fixing his heart upon God alone, he may be pardoned if he still want such warmth of affection, as so great a good might justly raise.

But till all this be done, we as vainly appeal to our conſtitutions, tempers and infirmities of our ſtate, as the unprofitable ſervant appealed to the hardneſs of his maſter, and therefore hid his talent in the earth.

And as it is there ſaid, *Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked ſervant; thou kneweſt that I was an auſtere man*, &c. *wherefore then gaveſt not thou my money into the bank?* &c.

So we may juſtly fear that we ſhall be judged out of our own mouths; for, if we know the loving God with all our heart and ſoul, to be ſo difficult to the temper and infirmities of our nature, why therefore do we not remove every hindrance, renounce every vain affection, and with double diligence practiſe all the means of forming this divine temper? for this we may be aſſured of, that the ſeeking happineſs in the enjoyments of wealth, is as contrary to the entire love of God, as wrapping up the talent in a *napkin* is contrary to improving it.

He that has renounced the world, as having nothing in it that can render him happy, will find his heart at liberty to aſpire to God in the higheſt degrees of love and deſire; he will then know what the *Pſalmiſt* means by thoſe expreſſions, *My heart is athriſt for God; when ſhall I appear before the preſence of God?*

And till we do thus renounce the world, we are ſtrangers to the temper and ſpirit of piety; we do but act the part of religion, and are no more affected with thoſe devotions which are put into our mouths, than an *actor* upon the *ſtage* is really angry himſelf, when he ſpeaks an angry ſpeech.

Religion is only what it ſhould be, when its happineſs has entered into our ſoul, and filled our hearts with its proper tempers, when it is the ſettled object of our minds, and governs and affects us, as worldly men are affected with that happineſs which governs their actions.

The ambitious man naturally rejoices at every thing that leads to his greatneſs, and as naturally grieves at ſuch accidents as oppoſe it.

Good Chriſtians, that are ſo wiſe as to aim only at one

one happineſs, will as naturally be affected in this manner, with that which promotes or hinders their endeavours after it.

For happineſs, in whatever it is placed, equally governs the heart of him that aſpires after it.

It is therefore as neceſſary to renounce the ſatisfactions of riches fortune, and place our chief happineſs in God, as it is neceſſary to love him with all our heart, and all our ſoul, with all our mind, and all our ſtrength.

Another duty, which alſo proves the neceſſity of this doctrine, is the love of our neighbour: *Thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thyſelf.*

Now he that thinks he can perform this duty, without taking our Saviour's advice of forſaking all, and following him; is as much miſtaken, as if he imagines that he loves his neighbour as himſelf, tho' he heaps up treaſures for his own ſelf-enjoyments and ſelf-gratifications.

If a man would know what this love of his neighbour implies, let him look impartially into his own heart, and ſee what it is that he wiſhes to himſelf, and then turn all thoſe ſame wiſhes to his neighbour, and this will make him feel the juſt meaſure of his duty, better than any other deſcription.

This will alſo teach him, that this true love of his neighbour is as inconſiſtent with the love of the world, as duelling is inconſiſtent with meekneſs and forgiveneſs of injuries.

This love is a temper of mind that ſuits only ſuch beings, as have *one common undivided* happineſs, where they cannot be rivals to one another: now this is the ſtate of Chriſtians, who have as truly *one common* happineſs, as they have one common God; but if we put ourſelves out of this ſtate, and project for ourſelves other felicities in the uncertain enjoyments of this life, we make ourſelves as uncapable of this neighbourly love, as *wolves* and *bears* that live upon prey.

Now one common undivided happineſs being the only poſſible foundation for the practice of this great

benevolence, it is demonſtrable, that if we ſeek too eagerly any other happineſs than this, if we don't renounce other pretenſions, we cannot keep clear of ſuch tempers, as will ſhew that we do not love our neighbour as ourſelves.

This love, as has been ſaid of the entire love of God, is ſuited to the ſtate of angels, it being not to be imagined that they have more benevolence than this for one another; they can readily perform this duty, becauſe they never vary from their *one true* happineſs; and as this makes it eaſy to them, ſo nothing can make it *poſſible* for us, but by imitating them, in placing our *only* happineſs in the enjoyment of our true good.

If our happineſs depends upon men, our tempers will neceſſarily depend upon men, and we ſhall love and hate people in proportion as they help or hinder us in ſuch happineſs.

This is abſolutely neceſſary, and we can never act otherwiſe, till we are governed by a happineſs where no men can make themſelves our rivals, nor prevent our attainments of it.

When we are in this ſtate, it will be no harder to help our neighbour as our ſelves, than it is to wish him the enjoyments of the ſame light, or the ſame common air; for theſe, being goods which may be enjoyed equally by all, are not the occaſions of envy.

But whilſt we continue eager competitors for the imaginary enjoyments of this life, we lay a neceſſary foundation for ſuch paſſions as are all directly contrary to the fruits of love.

I take it for granted, that when our Saviour delivered this doctrine of love, he intended it ſhould be a governing principle of our lives; it concerns us therefore, if we have any regard to our ſalvation, to look careſully to ourſelves, and to put ourſelves in ſuch a ſtate, as we may be capable of performing it.

Now in this ſtate we cannot be, till we are content to make no more of this world, than a ſupply of our neceſſities, and to wait for *one only* happineſs in the enjoyment of God.

I don't appeal to niggards and worldlings, to the prou-

proud and ambitious; let those who think themselves *moderate* in their worldly desires and enjoyments, let such deal faithfully with their own breasts, and see whether their prosecution of worldly affairs, permits them to love all Christians as themselves.

Their moderation may perhaps keep them from the bitter envyings and hatreds to which ambitious worldlings are subject; but still they have as certainly, in their degree, and in proportion to their love of the world, their envyings, and hatreds, and want of sincere love, as other men.

If any one's heart can bear him witness, that in thought, word and deed, he treats all men with that love which he bears to himself, it must be one whose heart fervently cries out with the apostle, *God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of Jesus Christ, by which the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.*

Any other glory than this, any other use of the world than being thus crucified to it, is inconsistent with this degree of brotherly love.

For a further proof of this truth, we need only look into the world, and see the spirit that appears amongst almost all Christians.

We need not go to wicked and loose people; let us go into any virtuous family whatever, we shall find that it has its particular *hatreds*, its *envyings* and *evil-speakings*, and all founded in the interests and regards of the world.

Now all this necessarily proceeds from hence: that all Christians are busy in attending to their worldly interests, intending only to keep clear of dishoneſt and scandalous practices; that is, they use the world as far as honest *Heathens* or *Jews* would do, and so consequently have such tempers as *Jews* and *Heathens* have.

For it is not only cheating and unlawful practices, but the too eager desire of worldly things and the placing happiness in them, that lays the foundation of all these unchristian tempers; that begets enmities, and divides Christians into more parties than there are families amongst them.

Were there no diſhoneſt perſons amongſt us, yet if Chriſtians give themſelves up to the happineſs and enjoyments of this world, there would be ſtill almoſt the ſame want of the loving our neighbour as ourſelves.

So that it is purely the engaging ſo far in the world as ſober Chriſtians do; it is their falſe ſatisfaction in ſo many things that they ought to renounce; it is their being too much alive to the world, that makes even the devout and religious, ſubject to tempers ſo contrary to the love of their neighbour.

How comes it, that moſt people find it ſo eaſy to love, forgive, and pray for all men at the hour of their death? is it not becauſe the reaſon of enmity, envy and diſlike, then ceaſes? all worldly intereſts being then at an end, all worldly tempers die away with them.

Let this therefore teach us, that it is abſolutely neceſſary to die to the world, if we would live and love like Chriſtians.

I have now done with this ſubject of *renouncing the world, and all worldly tempers.* I hope I have been ſo plain and clear upon it, as is ſufficient to convince any ſerious reader, that it is a doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt, that it is the foundation of his religion, and ſo neceſſary, that without it we can exerciſe no Chriſtian temper in the manner that we ought.

Some people have imagined, that they only renounce the world as it ought to be renounced, who retire to a *cloyſter*, or a *monaſtery*; but this is as unreaſonable, as to make it neceſſary to lay aſide *all* uſe of *cloaths* to avoid the vanity of *dreſs*.

As there is a ſober and reaſonable uſe of particular things, ſo there is a ſober reaſonable uſe of the world, to which it is as lawful to conform as it is lawful to eat and drink.

They renounce the world as they ought, who live in the midſt of it without worldly tempers, who comply with their ſhare in the offices of human life, without complying with the ſpirit that reigneth in the world.

As

As it is right to go thus far, ſo it is wrong as ſoon as we take one ſtep farther.

There is nothing right in eating and drinking, but a ſtrict and *religious* temperance. It is the ſame thing in other compliances with the ſtate of this life; we may *dreſs*, we may *buy* and *ſell*, we may *labour*, we may provide for our ſelves and our families; but as theſe things are only lawful for the ſame reaſon that it is lawful to eat and drink, ſo are they to be governed by the ſame *religious* ſtrictneſs that is to govern our eating and drinking; all variation from this rule is like *gluttony* and *intemperance*, and fills our ſouls with ſuch tempers, as are all contrary to the ſpirit of Chriſt and his religion.

The firſt ſtep that our deſires take beyond things of neceſſity to our ranks, ranks us amongſt *worldlings*, and raiſes in our minds all thoſe tempers, which diſturb the minds of worldly men.

You think yourſelf very reaſonable and conformable to Chriſtianity, becauſe you are moderate in your deſires; you don't deſire an immenſe eſtate, you deſire only a *little* finery in dreſs, a *little* ſtate in equipage, and only to have things *genteel* about you.

I anſwer; if this be your caſe, you are happy in this, that you have but little deſires to conquer; but if theſe deſires have as *faſt* hold of you, as greater deſires have of other people, you are in the ſame ſtate of worldly-mindedneſs that they are, and are no more *dead* to the world, than they that are the *fondeſt* of it. A fondneſs for three or four hundred pounds a year, is the ſame ſlavery to the world, as a fondneſs for three or four thouſand; and he that craves earneſtly the happineſs of *little fineries*, has no more renounced the world, than he that wants the ſplendor of a large fortune.

You hate the extravagance of *dreſs*; but if you cannot depart from your own *little finery*, you have as much to alter in your heart, as they that like none but the *fineſt* of ornaments.

Conſider therefore, that what you call moderate deſires, may be as great contrarieties to religion, as

Joſe which you reckon immoderate; becauſe they hold le heart in the ſame ſtate of falſe ſatisfactions, raiſe le ſame vain tempers, and do not ſuffer the ſoul to reſt wholly upon God.

When the ſpirit of religion is your ſpirit, when heavenly-mindedneſs is your temper, when your heart is ſet upon God, you will have no more taſte for the vanity of one ſort of life than another.

Farther; imagine to yourſelf, that this pretence in favour of moderate deſires, and *little fineries*, had been made to our bleſſed Saviour, when he was upon earth, preaching his doctrines of renouncing the world and denying ourſelves.

I dare ſay your own conſcience tells you, that he would have rebuk'd the author of ſuch a pretence with as much indignation, as he rebuk'd *Peter*, *Get thee behind me, Satan, for thou ſavoureſt not the things that be of God.*

Now the ſpirit of Chriſtianity is the ſame ſpirit that was in Chriſt, when he was upon the earth: and if we have reaſon to think that ſuch a pretence would have been ſeverely condemned by Chriſt, we have the ſame reaſon to be ſure, that it is as ſeverely condemned by Chriſtianity.

Had our bleſſed Saviour, a little before he left the world, given eſtates to his apoſtles, with a permiſſion for them to enjoy *little fineries*, and a moderate *ſtate* in *genteel ſhew* and *equipage*, he had undone all that he had ſaid of the contempt of the world, and heavenly-mindedneſs; ſuch a permiſſion had been a contradiction to the moſt repeated and common doctrines that he had taught.

Had his apoſtles lived in ſuch a ſtate, how could they have gloried only in the *croſs* of Chriſt, by which the world was *crucified* unto them, and they unto the world? how could they have ſaid, *Love not the world nor the things in the world, for all that is in the world, the luſt of the fleſh, the luſt of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.*

Had they lived in a *little ſtate*, in a moderate ſhew of figure, equipage, and worldly delights, how could they

they have ſaid, that *ſhe that liveth in pleaſure, is dead whilſt ſhe liveth?*

How could they have ſaid, that *they who will be rich, fall into a temptation, and a ſnare, and into many fooliſh and hurtful luſts, which drown men in deſtruction?*

For it is not the deſire of *great* riches; but it is the deſire of riches, and a ſatisfaction in the pleaſures of them, that is the *ſnare*, and the *temptation*; and that fills mens minds with fooliſh and hurtful luſts; that keeps them in the ſame ſtate of worldly folly, as they are whoſe deſires are greater.

Laſtly, had the apoſtles lived in that manner, how could they have ſaid, that *whatſoever is born of God, overcometh the world?*

For certainly he who is happy in the *pleaſure* and *figure* of a ſmall eſtate, has no more overcome the world, than he that is happy in the *ſplendor* of one that is greater.

Thus therefore matters ſtand with relation to our bleſſed Saviour and his apoſtles; the doctrines they taught made it impoſſible for them to take any part, or ſeek any pleaſure, in the *ſhew*, and *figure*, and *riches* of this world.

One would think, that this one reflection was alone ſufficient to ſhew us, what contempt of the world, what heavenly affection we are to aſpire after.

For how blind and weak muſt we be, if we can think that we *may* live in a ſpirit and temper, which could not *poſſibly* be the ſpirit and temper of Chriſt and his apoſtles?

Another pretence for worldly care and labour after riches, is to provide for our families.

You want to leave fortunes to your children, that they may have their ſhare in the *figure* and *ſhew* of the world. Now conſider, do you do this upon principles of religion, as the wiſeſt and beſt thing you can do, either for yourſelf, or your children?

Can you be ſaid to have choſen the *one thing needful* for yourſelf, or the *one thing needful* for them, who make your chief care to put them in a ſtate of life, that is

a *ſnare*,

a *ſnare*, and a *temptation*, and the moſt likely of all others, to fill their minds with *fooliſh and hurtful luſts*.

Is it your kindneſs towards them, that puts you upon this labour? Conſider therefore what this kindneſs is founded upon; perhaps it is ſuch a kindneſs, as when *tender* mothers carry their daughters to all *plays* and *balls*; ſuch a kindneſs, as when *indulgent* fathers ſupport their ſons in all the expence of their follies; ſuch kind parents may more properly be called the *tempters* and *betrayers* of their children.

You love your children, and therefore you would leave them rich. It is ſaid of our bleſſed Saviour, that he loved the *young rich* man that came unto him, and, as an inſtance of his love, he bid him *ſell all* that he had, and give to the poor. What a contrariety is here? The love which dwelleth in you, is as contrary to that love which dwelt in Chriſt, as darkneſs is contrary to light.

We have our Saviour's expreſs command to love one another, *as he has loved us*; and can you think that you are following this love, when you are giving thoſe things to your children, which he took away from his friends, and which he could not poſſibly have given them, without contradicting the greateſt part of his doctrines?

But ſuppoſing that you ſucceed in your intentions, and leave your children rich, what muſt you ſay to them when you are dying? will you then tell them, that you have the ſame opinion of the greatneſs and value of riches that you ever had; that you feel the pleaſure of remembering how much thought and care you have taken to get them? will you tell them, that you have provided for their eaſe and ſoftneſs, their pleaſure and indulgence, and figure in the world; and that they cannot do better than to eat and drink, and take their fill of ſuch enjoyments as riches afford? This would be dying like an *atheiſt*.

But, on the other hand, if you will die like a *good Chriſtian*, muſt you not endeavour to fill their minds with your dying thoughts? muſt you not tell them, that they will ſoon be in a ſtate, when the world will ſignify no

more to them than it does to you; and that there is a deceitfulneſs, a vanity, a littleneſs, in the things of this life, which only dying men feel as they ought?

Will you not tell them, that all your own failings, the irregularity of your life, your defects in devotion, the folly of your tempers, the ſtrength of your paſſions, and your failure in Chriſtian perfection, have been all owing to wrong opinions of the value of worldly things; and that if you had always ſeen the world in the ſame light that you ſee it now, your life had been devoted to God, and you would have lived in all thoſe holy tempers and heavenly affections, in which you now deſire to die?

Will you not tell them, that it is the enjoyment of the world that corrupts the hearts, and blinds the minds of all people; and that the only way to know what good there is in *devotion*, what excellence there is in *piety*, what wiſdom in *holineſs*, what happineſs in *heavenly affection*, what vanity in this *life*, and what greatneſs in *eternity*, is to die to the world and all worldly tempers?

Will you not tell them that riches ſpent upon our ſelves, either in the pleaſures of *eaſe* and *indulgence*, in the vanity of *dreſs*, or the ſhew of *ſtate* and *equipage*, are the bane and deſtruction of our ſouls, making us blindly content with *dreams* of happineſs, till death awakes us into *real* miſery?

From this therefore it appears, that your kindneſs for your children, is ſo far from being a good reaſon why you ſhould ſo carefully labour to leave them rich, and in the enjoyment of the *ſtate* and *ſhew* of the world; that if you die in a ſpirit of piety, if you love them, as Chriſt loved his diſciples, your kindneſs will oblige you to exhort them to renounce the delight in ſelf-enjoyment of riches, as contrary to thoſe holy tempers, and that heavenly affection, which you now find to be the only good and happineſs of human nature.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

CHRISTIANITY is a *doctrine of the croſs*, that teaches the reſtoration of mankind to the favour of God, by the death and ſacrifice of Jeſus Chriſt.

This being the foundation of the Chriſtian religion, it ſhews us, that all perſons who will act conformably to the nature and reaſon of Chriſtianity, muſt make themſelves ſufferers for ſin.

For if there is a reaſonableneſs between ſin and ſuffering, every Chriſtian acts againſt the reaſon of things, that does not endeavour to pay ſome part of that debt which is due to ſin.

Indeed it would be ſtrange to ſuppoſe, that mankind were redeemed by the ſufferings of their Saviour, to live in eaſe and ſoftneſs themſelves; that ſuffering ſhould be the *neceſſary* atonement for ſin; and yet that *ſinners* ſhould be excuſed from *ſufferings*.

Such an high-prieſt became us, ſays the apoſtle, *who is holy, harmleſs, undefiled, ſeparate from ſinners*.

Now if the *holineſs* of Chriſt rendered his ſacrifice acceptable to God, does not this teach us that we muſt labour to be *holy*, in order to be accepted of God?

But is there not the ſame reaſon, and the ſame example in the ſufferings of Chriſt? if they made God more propitious to ſin, muſt we not as well take this way of ſuffering, to make ourſelves fitter objects of divine pardon?

There is therefore the ſame reaſon, in the nature of the thing, for us ſinners to endeavour to conform ourſelves to the *ſufferings*, as to labour after the *holineſs* of Chriſt; ſince they both jointly conſpired to recommend the great atonement for ſin, and muſt jointly conſpire to render us proper objects of the benefits of it.

Nor is the ſinleſs ſtate of Chriſt a better reaſon for us to avoid and flee from ſin, than his ſuffering ſtate is a reaſon for our renouncing ſoftneſs and indulgence in pleaſures.

Had Chriſt wanted either holineſs or ſufferings, his ſacrifice

ſacrifice had been wanting in an eſſential part. If therefore we think to be accepted of God by holineſs, without ſuffering, we ſeem to contradict the nature of our religion as much, as if we thought to be accepted thro' ſufferings without holineſs.

It may perhaps be ſaid, in the words of our *liturgy*, *That Chriſt, having by his one oblation of himſelf once offered, made a full, perfect, and ſufficient ſacrifice, oblation, and ſatisfaction for the ſins of the whole world*, that Chriſtians have no occaſion to make any ſuffering for ſin.

To this it may be anſwer'd,

That the ſacrifice of Chriſt is full and ſufficient; firſt, as it takes away the neceſſity of all the *legal ſacrifices*: ſecondly, as it has no need to be repeated again: and thirdly, as it fully reconciles God to accept of us upon the terms of the new covenant.

Now there is no occaſion to ſuffer for ſin, in order to make the ſacrifice of Chriſt *more compleat*, or to add a further value to the atonement for ſin; but then it is to be conſidered, that if ſelf-ſuffering for ſin be a good and reaſonable duty in itſelf, and proper for a ſinner, that the fulneſs of Chriſt's ſacrifice has no more taken away the neceſſity of it, than it has taken away the neceſſity of humility or any other virtue.

Chriſt is as well ſaid to be our *ſanctification*, our *holineſs* and *righteouſneſs*, as our atonement for ſin; yet we ſhould much miſtake the ſcripture, if we ſhould think, that becauſe he is our holineſs, therefore we need not endeavour to be holy ourſelves.

Yet this is as good a concluſion, as to imagine, that we need not ſuffer for our ſins ourſelves, becauſe Chriſt's ſufferings are a full atonement for ſin.

For they are no otherwiſe a *ſufficient atonement* for us, than as Chriſt is our *ſufficient holineſs*; ſo that we may as well truſt to his holineſs, without labouring to be holy ourſelves, as truſt to his ſufferings, without making ourſelves alſo ſufferers for ſin.

Let it now therefore be obſerved, that were there no particular precepts or doctrines, that expreſly called us to a ſtate of ſelf-denial and ſelf-ſuffering, the very nature of our religion is an undeniable argument, that

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the way of ſuffering, is the right and certain way for ſinners to find God more propitious to their ſin.

He that can doubt of this, muſt ſuppoſe, that God required a way of atonement in Jeſus Chriſt, that had nothing of atonement in it; for if it had, it muſt be undeniable, that all, who, as far as their natures will allow, conform themſelves to the ſimilitude of Chriſt's ſacrifice, muſt make themſelves more acceptable to God.

That Chriſt's ſufferings have not made all other ſufferings for ſin needleſs, is plain from hence; that all Chriſtians are ſtill left ſubject to *death:* for ſurely it may with truth be affirm'd, that death is a ſuffering for ſin.

Now, ſince all Chriſtians are to offer up their bodies at death, as a *ſacrifice* or *ſuffering* for ſin, this plainly teaches us that a ſtate of ſelf-denial and ſuffering is the proper ſtate of this life: for ſurely it muſt be proper to make every part of our life ſuitable to ſuch an *end.*

Does God unmake us, and daſh our very form into pieces; and can we think that a life of pleaſure and ſelf-indulgence can become us under ſuch a ſentence?

What plainer proof can we have, that we are *devoted* ſufferers for ſin, than that we are devoted to death? for death hath no place in a ſtate of allowed pleaſure and enjoyment. When the ſuffering for ſin is over, there will be no more death; but ſo long as death laſts, ſo long are all beings, that are ſubject to death, in a ſtate that requires humiliation and ſuffering; and they rebel againſt God, if they do not make their lives conformable to that mark of divine diſpleaſure, which death ſignifies.

Thus, as the *mortality* of our condition is a certain proof that our life is in *diſorder*, and *unacceptable* to God; ſo is it alſo a proof, that we ought to refuſe pleaſures and ſatisfactions, which tend to diſorder, and ſtay for joy and delights till we are removed to ſuch a ſtate of perfection, as God will delight to continue to all eternity.

The apoſtle tells us, that *fleſh and blood cannot enter into the kingdom of God:* muſt we not therefore be very unreaſonable,

reaſonable, if we can caſt about for happineſs in ſuch condition, or give up ourſelves to the vain pleaſures d indulgences of a fleſh and blood, which are too rrupt, too unholy to enter into the kingdom of God?

This may ſuffice to ſhew us the excellency and reaſonableneſs of our Saviour's doctrine.

He ſaid unto them all, if any man will come after me, let him deny himſelf, take up his croſs daily, and follow me.

For whoſoever will ſave his life, ſhall loſe it, and whoſoever will loſe his life for my ſake, the ſame ſhall ſave it.

Here is a common condition propoſed to all that ould be Chriſt's diſciples; they are call'd to deny mſelves, and take up their croſs daily. To ſhew that this belongs to all Chriſtians, the apoſtle ſaith, *ſaid unto them* all; St. *Mark* hath it thus, *And when had called the people unto him, with his diſciples alſo, he d unto them.*

The church of *Rome* refuſes to give the *cup* in the y ſacrament to the laity. We reckon it a very d argument againſt that cuſtom, that our Saviour, en he delivered the cup, ſaid unto them, *Drink ye of this.*

Now if it be an argument that *all Chriſtians* are to ive the cup, becauſe in the inſtitution of the ſament it is ſaid, *Drink ye all of this*; is it not as good rgument that all Chriſtians are here called to deny mſelves, and take up their croſs daily, becauſe it is vered in the ſame manner, *He ſaid unto them all*; again, *When he called the people unto him, with his iples alſo, he ſaid unto them?*

To me this place ſeems as general a call to all Chrins; as, *Drink ye all of this*, is a general command ll Chriſtians.

Let any one try to evade the obligation of this , and he will find, that he muſt uſe ſuch arguments, will equally ſerve to get rid of any other part of hocripture.

f this paſſage only called the firſt diſciples of Chriſt n external ſtate of ſufferings and perſecutions from r people, it might, with ſome pretence, be ſuppoſed

poſed only to relate to people, when they are in ſuch a ſtate of perſecution.

But as it calls them to *deny themſelves*, to take up their croſs daily, it is plain, that it calls them to a ſuffering and ſelf-denial, which they were to inflict upon themſelves.

Now if they are called thus to deny themſelves and ſubject themſelves to a voluntary croſs, in order to be Chriſt's diſciples, it will be hard to ſhew, that ſelf-denials are not as laſting terms of Chriſtianity, as Baptiſm and the Lord's Supper.

Water-baptiſm is neceſſary, becauſe our Saviour has inſtituted it, and the reaſon for continuing it is the ſame as for obſerving it at firſt. But ſtill it is but an external rite, or ſacrament, which in its own nature hath nothing relating to holineſs and purification of the ſoul; but has all its excellency from the inſtitution of Chriſt.

This cannot be ſaid of theſe ſorts of ſufferings, for they have an *internal* and *eſſential* relation to holineſs and purification in the *preſent ſtate* of man.

I ſay, in the *preſent ſtate* of man, becauſe, though theſe ſelf-denials or mortifications, are only proper for man whilſt he is in this ſtate of corruption, yet they are as true parts of holineſs, and as eſſential virtues, as thoſe which will laſt for ever.

Charity to the poor is founded in the neceſſities and infirmities of this life; yet is it as real a degree of holineſs, and as much to be performed for its own ſake, as that charity which will never have an end.

It is the ſame in theſe ſelf-denials, they only belong to a ſtate of ſin; but whilſt ſuch a ſtate continues, they are the indiſpenſable duty of ſinners, and as neceſſary and acceptable to God as relieving the poor.

This muſt be allowed, or we muſt deny that there was any real atonement for ſin, in the ſufferings and death of Chriſt; for, if there was any real atonement in the ſufferings of Chriſt, if his ſufferings rendered God propitious and reconciled to ſinners, it is undeniable, that all who ſuffer with the *ſame ſpirit* that Chriſt ſuffered, muſt in their degree recommend them-

ſelves

ives to the favour of God, on the ſame account, d for the ſame reaſons, that the ſufferings of Chriſt rocured peace and reconciliation.

If Chriſt the Lord of all, and Head of the church, ſtill making interceſſion for us at the right hand of od; does not this plainly teach us, that we cannot e accepted by God, unleſs we live in a ſtate of ſup- ication and prayer for ourſelves?

And if he, who had no ſin of his own, was obliged ſuch ſufferings, to make himſelf be heard as an *ad- cate* for ſin; ſurely ſinners themſelves cannot pre- me to ſue for their own pardon, without putting emſelves in the *like ſtate* of humiliation and ſuffer- g. For ſince the atonement is made by ſufferings, is as truly recommends ſufferings to ſinners, as, if it d been made by prayer, that would have ſhewn the y of prayer to have been the way of finding pardon.

Self-denial therefore and ſufferings, are duties eſſen- l to the preſent ſtate of ſin, and recommend us to God, holineſs and purity recommend us by their own na- re and intrinſick fitneſs; that is, they are good, as ayer, humility, and charity are good.

When we ſhall be removed to a ſtate that is free m ſin, ſelf-denial and mortification will then be no rt of our duty; but ſo long as this ſtate of ſin laſts, long does the neceſſity and reaſon of ſelf-denial and ortification laſt; they are as neceſſary as prayers and votion, and are as truly eſſential parts of holineſs, chaſtity and humility.

For repentance and ſorrow for ſin is as neceſſary to being in a ſtate of ſin, as neceſſary on its own ac- unt, and from the nature of the thing, as the love God is neceſſary from a being that receives all his ppineſs from God.

If we can find a time, when we have no ſin to la- ent, no occaſion for the ſeverities of repentance, it ay be granted, that that would be a time for the ab- ining from ſelf-denial.

But if human life knows of no ſuch ſeaſon; if we n never look at ourſelves, but under the weight of , and danger of temptation; it is a demonſtration

that

that indignation at ourſelves, and a voluntary ſufferin for ſin, is the neceſſary conſtant ſtate of Chriſtians.

Indeed if it be allowed that repentance for ſin is ne-ceſſary, and that it ought to be the conſtant habit of Chriſtian's mind, till this life be at an end, we nee no ſtronger proof of the conſtant neceſſity of ſelf-de-nial and mortification.

If therefore we conſider the reaſon and fitneſs of re-pentance, we ſee the reaſon and fitneſs of ſelf-denial and conſequently we muſt acknowledge, that thei ſelf-denials are not leſs neceſſary, nor leſs recommend-ed to us, than repentance and ſorrow for ſin.

For ſince they are of the ſame nature, and for th ſame end, and alſo eſſential to true repentance, it fol-lows, that all Chriſtians are obliged to be as conſtan in ſelf-denials as they are to be conſtant in their repen-tance.

Becauſe ſuch voluntary ſufferings have the ſame e ſential relation to holineſs, that charity and the lov of God have.

For tho' charity and the love of God will neve ceaſe, but this ſelf-denial will have an end; yet is thi ſelf-denial during this ſtate of ſin, as eſſential to th holineſs of perſons in ſuch a ſtate as any other virtue

It being the ſame degree of inward purity, and r right a ſpirit and temper to *mourn and afflict* ourſelve for our ſins, as to *love* that which God *loves*, or b thankful for his mercies.

Now if a perſon was to give himſelf up to *ſorro* in a *ſtate* of *happineſs*, or to unthankfulneſs, tho' in th midſt of mercies, he would act juſt as unreaſonably, ju as contrary to the nature of things, as he that give himſelf up to pleaſures and indulgences in a ſtate o corruption and ſin.

Let it therefore be carefully obſerved, that ſelf-de-nial and mortification are only other words for repen-tance and ſorrow for ſin, and he that can diſtinguiſ them from one another, may diſtinguiſh grief fro ſorrow.

He therefore that can doubt whether Chriſtians ar called to a daily practice of ſelf-denial, ſeems to kno

little of true religion, as if he doubted whether they ere called to a daily repentance. For when we may e in a ſtate contrary to *repentance*; then, and then ly, may we live in a ſtate contrary to *ſelf-denial*.

Let a Chriſtian ever ceaſe from ſelf-denial, let him er forbear the mortification of his appetites, and at t time he ceaſes to conſider himſelf as a *ſinner*, and haves himſelf as tho' he were then free from the lt and *danger* of ſin.

But as he never is in this ſtate of freedom; ſo if he s as if he was ſo, he acts as falſly, as if he took him- to be an *angel*.

There is therefore as much reaſon, that the *daily croſs* ſelf-denial ſhould be impoſed upon Chriſtians, as a ly prayer or repentance; and there is the ſame im- ty, the ſame falſe judgment in refuſing a daily ſelf- ial, as in refuſing or ceaſing from a daily devotion ſorrow for ſin.

For a man may as well imagine that he prays or es thanks to God, when he only repeats the words a prayer or thankſgiving, as that he repents for his , unleſs his repentance be a *real* puniſhment, a *true* of mortification.

We may now obſerve, that this doctrine, of ſelf- ering is founded upon the moſt important funda- ntal articles of our religion.

f we conſider our redemption as an atonement le by ſuffering, does not this ſhew us the neceſſity eeking pardon by a fellowſhip in the ſufferings of iſt?

Need we any other argument, that there is no ſtate nitable to a ſinner as that of ſuffering, when God appointed ſufferings as the atonement for ſin?

f we conſider, that we are devoted to *death*, and er a neceſſity of falling into duſt, as a *ſacrifice* for does not this teach us the neceſſity of making our s conformable to the intention of ſuch a death?

or could there be any *neceſſity* that we ſhould die as crifice for ſin, if we might lead a life of a *contrary* re? or could we act more contrary to God, than naking that life a ſtate of pleaſure and indulgence,

which

which he has laid under the *curſe* of death? ought we to indulge a life, which God conſiders as too unholy to continue in being?

Laſtly, If we conſider, that repentance is the chief the moſt conſtant and perpetual duty of a Chriſtian, that our holineſs has hardly any other exiſtence tha what ariſes from a perpetual repentance, can it b doubted that mortification and ſelf-denial are eſſentia perpetual parts of our duty?

For to ſuppoſe a repentance without the pain mortification and the puniſhment of ſelf-denial, is abſurd, as to ſuppoſe a labour after holineſs, whi takes not one ſtep towards it.

For if repentance be not an exerciſe of mortifica on and ſelf-denial, it is no more a ſtate of repentanc than the lifting up our hands without our hearts i ſtate of prayer and devotion.

Repentance is a hearty ſorrow for ſin; ſorrow i pain or puniſhment, which we are obliged to raiſe to high a degree as we can, that we may be fitter obje of God's pardon.

So that ſelf-denial and mortification is only anot word for a *real repentance.*

If Chriſtians will ſtill ſo far forget the nature a deſign of their religion, as to imagine that our Sa our's call to a daily croſs and ſelf-denial, was onl call to his firſt diſciples to expect ſufferings and de from their enemies; they are governed by as little r ſon, as if they ſhould think, *Repent ye, for the king of heaven is at hand,* only obliged thoſe to repenta who firſt entered into the kingdom of God.

For there is nothing in the nature of repenta that ſhews it to be a more conſtant duty, or more eſſential to the Chriſtian life, than there is in mortifi on and ſelf-ſuffering.

It is alſo very abſurd to ſuppoſe, that a comman deny themſelves, and take up their own croſs da ſhould mean only the enduring and expecting of ſuf ings from others.

Let us now ſuppoſe the contrary, that Chriſtians not called to this ſtate of mortification, or denial

ir appetites. Let us ſuppoſe, that Chriſtian *churches* full of *fine gay* people, who ſpend their days in all pleaſures and indulgences which the ſpirit of the rld can invent.

Can it in any ſenſe be ſaid of ſuch, that they live in *ſtate of repentance and ſorrow* for ſin? may they not h as much regard to truth, be ſaid to live in *ſack-h and aſhes?* can their hearts feel any ſorrow, or be urning for the weight and miſery of ſin, who live y to the ſtudied enjoyments of eaſe and pleaſure? they be ſaid to grieve at guilt, or be afraid of ſin, o pamper all their appetites, and ſeek all the enjoy-nts that lead to temptation? can they, who live in gratifications of the fleſh, and ſcenes of pleaſure, ſaid to be working out their ſalvation *with fear and mbling?* may they not as juſtly be ſaid to be walking e-foot to *Jeruſalem?*

If therefore we will not deſtroy the whole ſtate of re-on, if we will but own it to be a ſtate of *trial and bation*, we muſt alſo allow, that ſelf-denial and ab-ence from pleaſures are daily eſſential duties of it. For a life of ſorrow for ſin, and mourning for the lt of it, and a life of pleaſure and indulgence, are onſiſtent ſtates, and as neceſſarily deſtroy one ano-r, as motion puts an end to reſt.

Repentance will have no place in heaven, becauſe t will be a ſtate of perfection; and for the ſame rea-it ought never to be laid aſide on earth, becauſe re is no time when we are not under the guilt, and ject to the danger of ſin.

This does not ſuppoſe, that we are always to be ut-ing *forms of confeſſion* from our mouths; but it ſup-es, that we are always to live with ſo much watch-neſs as becomes penitent ſinners, and never do any ng, but what highly ſuits with a *ſtate of repentance*. So that whenever we can abate our ſelf-denials, hout abating our ſorrow for ſin, when we can find aſures that neither *ſoften* the mind, nor make it *leſs rful* of temptation; then, and ſo far only, may we k our eaſe.

For repentance, whilſt it is only a lip-work at ſtated times,

times, is nothing; it has not had its effect till it h
entered into the ſtate and habit of our lives, and re
dered us as fearful of ſin in every part of our lives,
when we are making our confeſſions.

Now this ſtate of penitence, which alone is ſuited
a ſtate of corruption and infirmity, can no more ex
without conſtant daily ſelf-denial, than we can da
govern our appetites, without daily looking aft
them.

To proceed: Our Saviour ſaith, *Bleſſed are they t
mourn, for they ſhall be comforted.*

Now this is another direct call to ſelf-denial and
ſtinence from pleaſures, as muſt appear to every
that knows mourning to be different from pleaſure
indulgence.

The bleſſedneſs that is here aſcribed to mourn
muſt be underſtood in relation to mourning, as it
ſtate of life, and not as to any tranſient acts, or pa
cular times of mourning.

For no actions are valuable or rewardable, but
they ariſe from a *ſtate or temper* of mind that is c
ſtant and habitual.

If it had been ſaid, bleſſed are the charitable
muſt have meant, bleſſed are they who live in a
and habit of charity. For the ſame reaſon, are w
underſtand the bleſſedneſs, which is due to mourn
to be only due to a ſtate and life of ſelf-denial.

Secondly, *Bleſſed are they that mourn*, ſhews us, t
this mourning concerns all men as much, without
diſtinction of *time* or *perſons*; ſo that its excellency
fitneſs muſt be founded upon ſomething that is com
and conſtant to all times and all perſons. For if t
was any time, when we might change this ſtate
mourning, or were there any perſons that might be
cuſed from it, it could not be ſaid in general, *Bl
are they that mourn.*

If therefore this mourning be a reaſonable and
cellent temper, that equally leads *all orders* of me
bleſſedneſs, its reaſonableneſs muſt be founded in
common ſtate and condition of man; that is,
mourning be good for all men, it muſt be, becauſe

te and condition of all men, as ſuch, requires
urning.

But if this mourning be founded in the preſent ſtate
man, as ſuitable to his condition in this life, it muſt
always the ſame excellent and proper temper, till
eath changes his ſtate, and puts him in a condition
t requires another temper.

Now what can this ſtate of mourning be, but a ſor-
w founded upon a true ſenſe and feeling of the miſe-
of our ſtate, as it is a ſtate of *fallen ſpirits*, living
in and vanity, and *ſeparation* from God?

What can it be, but a ceaſing to enjoy and rejoice
he falſe goods and enjoyments of this life, becauſe
y delude and corrupt our hearts, increaſe our blind-
s, and ſink us deeper in our diſtance from God?

What mourning can be bleſſed, but ſuch as mourns
hat which diſpleaſes God, which condemns and re-
s what the wiſdom of God rejects, which looſens
from the vanity of the world, leſſens the weight of
corruption, and quickens our motions and aſpirings
ards perfection?

This is not a mourning that ſhews itſelf in *occaſional*
of ſorrow or dejection of mind; but it is a *regular*
er, or rather a *right judgment*, which refuſes plea-
s, that are not only the pleaſures of a corrupted
, but ſuch as alſo increaſe and ſtrengthen our cor-
ion.

One conſtant property of a true mourning, is abſti-
ce from pleaſures; and we generally reckon a ſor-
very near its end, when diverſions and amuſements
in to be reliſhed.

This mourning therefore to which this bleſſedneſs is
ibed, muſt be a conſtant abſtinence from vain
; it muſt preſerve itſelf by rejecting and diſreliſh-
ll thoſe worldly delights and ſatisfactions, which,
mitted, would put an end to its ſtate of mourn-

ow what is all this, but that ſtate of *ſelf-denial*
daily-croſs, to which our Saviour called his diſ-
s?

or we may imagine any thing, if we can imagine,

 that

that a ſtate of religious mourning is not a ſtate of religious ſelf-denial.

Unleſs therefore we will ſay, that the bleſſedneſs of mourning was alſo only preach'd to Chriſt's firſt followers; we muſt allow, that *all Chriſtians* are equally call'd to that *daily-croſs* and *ſelf-denial*, which was then required.

It ought alſo here to be obſerved, that we are called to theſe duties upon our hopes of happineſs.

For *bleſſed are they that mourn, for they ſhall be comforted*, is the ſame thing as ſaying, miſerable and curſed are they that do not mourn, for they ſhall not be comforted. Again,

Bleſſed are the poor in ſpirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Nothing can carry a greater denial and contradiction to all the tempers and ways of the world than this doctrine; it not only puts an end to all that we eſteem wicked and immoderate deſires of worldly ſatisfactions, but calls us from all worldly ſatisfactions, which any way faſten the ſoul to any falſe goods, and make it leſs ardent after true happineſs. As the Chriſtian religion regards only the ſalvation of our ſouls, and reſtoring us to a life with God in heaven, it conſiders every thing as ill, that keeps us in a ſtate of any falſe enjoyment, and nothing as good, but what looſens us from the world, and makes us leſs ſlaves to its vanities. *Bleſſed are the poor in ſpirit*, becauſe it is a ſpirit of diſengagement and diſreliſh of the world, that puts the ſoul in a ſtate of liberty and fitneſs to reliſh and receive the offers of true happineſs.

The doctrine of this text, is purely the doctrine of *ſelf-denial* and *daily-croſs*, to which our Saviour calls his diſciples.

For let any one conſider how it is poſſible for a man to be *poor in ſpirit*, but by renouncing thoſe enjoyments, which are the proper delights of ſuch as are *high* and *rich* in ſpirit. Now a man is *high* in ſpirit when his own ſtate and dignity give him a pleaſure; he is *rich* in ſpirit, who ſeeks and delights in the enjoyments and felicities which riches afford; he is there-

fore

re *poor in ſpirit*, that mortifies all vain thoughts, re-
cts every dangerous pleaſure, and avoids and diſ-
kes the empty ſatisfactions which riches and fortune
ive.

Now this, which is undoubtedly the doctrine of this
ſſage, is the eſſence and ſoul of all ſelf-denial and
ortification, which is nothing elſe but a conſtant
ecking all our vain tempers, and a denying our-
lves ſuch enjoyments as naturally ſtrengthen and ſup-
rt them. So that the bleſſedneſs of poverty of ſpi-
, is the bleſſedneſs of ſelf-denial.

For ſurely if we are called to a conſtant poverty of
irit, we are called to a conſtant refuſal of all enjoy-
nts but ſuch as poverty of ſpirit requires.

For it is to be obſerved, that when it is ſaid, *Bleſſed*
the poor in ſpirit, that the meaning is, *Bleſſed* are
y that are governed by this ſpirit, for that is only
an's ſpirit and temper, which rules and directs his
ions.

An ambitious man is one that is governed by his
rit of ambition; ſo a man is poor in ſpirit, when
t is the ſpirit that governs his actions.

As the rich in ſpirit are ſuch as ſeek the felicity and
tifications of riches; ſo the poor in ſpirit is he that
ids and diſlikes all ſuch gratifications, and ſeeks
h things as properly ſuit with ſuch a mortified habit
mind.

So that no one is to reckon himſelf *poor in ſpirit*, till
nakes him not only reject all inſtances of pride; but
he ſeeks and deſires things that are as proper to a
verty of ſpirit, as *food* is proper to hunger, or *wa-*
to thirſt.

For as hunger is known by its being a deſire of *food*,
thirſt by its deſire of *liquor*; ſo poverty of ſpirit
only be known by its ſeeking ſuch things as are as
ſigns of it, as the ſeeking of water is a ſign of
ſt.

For this is undeniable, that every ſpirit or temper
ſt only be known by the nature of the things it
ets.

If we are high-minded, our care will be exerciſed a-

bout high things; and if we are lowly in heart, we ſhall as certainly not only condeſcend, but ſeek after things that are lowly. Let a man therefore, who would deal faithfully with himſelf, conſider not only whether he is *proud, luxurious, indulgent* of himſelf, and devoted to the pleaſures and ſatisfactions of this life; but let him conſider whether he is *poor in ſpirit*, whether the things that he ſeeks, the deſigns he has on foot, the happineſs he aims at, and the courſe of his life, be ſuch as is really directed by a true poverty of ſpirit.

For he ought not to think that he is governed by this ſpirit, till he finds himſelf an enemy to every pleaſure, every care, and every labour that is contrary to it. When he hates ſelf-indulgence, as the *Epicure* hates ſelf-denial; when he ſtudies humility, as the *ambitious* man aims at *greatneſs*; when he avoids the vanities of the world, as the *ſailor* avoids *rocks*; then may he reckon himſelf entitled to that bleſſedneſs which belongs to thoſe who are *poor in ſpirit*.

This is that ſelf-denial, holy diſcipline, daily-croſs to which all Chriſtians are called; that by thus loſing their lives, that is, thus ceaſing to live the life of the world, they may purchaſe to themſelves a life of endleſs happineſs in another ſtate.

I believe there are few Chriſtians, who do not acknowledge that Chriſtianity is ſtill in ſome degree the *doctrine of the croſs*; and that the texts above-cited have ſtill ſome meaning with regard to all Chriſtians: but then they believe this in ſome ſuch looſe and general way, or live with ſo little regard to what they do believe of it, that they feel no condemnation in themſelves, whatever their lives are, from hearing theſe doctrines.

But notwithſtanding all this, it is certain that Chriſtians are as much obliged to conform exactly to the doctrines of the croſs, as to the obſervance of the commandments. For the ten commandments were no more certainly laws to the *Jews*, than the doctrine of ſelf-denial and poverty of ſpirit are laws to *all Chriſtians*.

Anot

Another plain and remarkable inſtance of ſelf-deni- is to be ſeen in the following words.

Ye have heard that it hath been ſaid, an eye for an eye, d a tooth for a tooth; but I ſay unto you, that ye reſiſt t evil, but whoſoever will ſmite thee on thy right cheek, rn to him the other alſo. And if any man will ſue thee at w, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak alſo. d whoſoever ſhall compel thee to go with him a mile, go ith him twain.

Our bleſſed Saviour's firſt propoſal was this, *If any n will come after me, let him deny himſelf, take up his ſs daily, and follow me.*

In the text before us, he inſtructs them in ſeveral in- nces, wherein this ſelf-denial and daily-croſs conſiſt- , which are now the common terms of ſalvation to Chriſtians.

We are to deny ourſelves, in not demanding a *tooth a tooth*, we are to take up our *daily-croſs* by turning r cheek to the ſmiter, and ſuffering ſuch ill uſage as could prevent by reſiſtance.

We are to deny ourſelves, in not defending ourſelves ſuits at law; and muſt take up the croſs of one in- y after another, rather than appeal to the contenti- of a trial. This is ſufficiently taught by our being uired to expoſe ourſelves to the farther loſs of our k, rather than have recourſe to law to ſecure our .

The words which deliver this doctrine are ſo very in and expreſs, that they need no illuſtration; it is plain alſo, that they equally belong to all Chriſti- of all ages. The manner of our Saviour's deli- ring himſelf upon theſe points, puts it out of all eſtion, that they were doctrines of the *croſs*, which e to be perpetual marks of his followers.

Ye have heard that it hath been ſaid, an eye for an eye,
But I ſay unto you, that ye reſiſt not evil, &c.

t was not poſſible for our Saviour to expreſs himſelf more authoritative manner than he has here done, o ſhew us more plainly, that he was here acting as *great law giver* of Chriſtians, and delivering doc- es, which ſhould be *perpetual laws* to all his diſci-

ples, and ſuch as ſhould conſtantly diſtinguiſh them from all the world. Nor is it poſſible for any one to evade the literal and open meaning of theſe doctrines but in ſuch a way as muſt deſtroy the ſenſe of any other part of ſcripure.

If it could be ſhewn, that we are not obliged by the plain and expreſs doctrine of theſe paſſages, it might as well be ſhewn, that the next doctrine, *But I ſay unto you, love your enemies, bleſs them that curſe you,* does not oblige us in the plain and literal ſenſe of the words.

For both the paſſages are equally ſupported by the ſame authority of our Saviour, expreſſed in the ſame manner, *I ſay unto you.* This degree alſo of love which we are to ſhew to our enemies, is as much a doctrine of the *croſs*, as contrary to all our natural tempers and worldly intereſts, as that of patience meekneſs, and ſubmiſſion to thoſe who treat us injuriouſly. Theſe virtues are alſo neceſſary to one another we cannot thus love and do good to our enemy, unleſs we are thus patient under ſufferings, and deny ourſelves all inſtances of anger and uneaſineſs at them.

It is pretended by ſome, that theſe paſſages only forbid our proſecution of *ſpightful* and *malicious* ſuits at law.

But ſuch people might as well pretend, that the eighth commandment only forbids *wanton* and *ſpightful* ſtealing, but allows it, when it is done ſoberly, and with no ſpightful intention.

For the caſe, which our Saviour put, is directly intended againſt ſuch a pretence as this.

It is the caſe of a man, who has a ſuit commenced againſt him for his *coat*, he is not allowed to conſider that it is his *own* coat, and that he enters no farther into the trial, than to ſecure his *coat*; he is not allowed to ſhew this degree of contention or anger at injuſtice or impatience under ſuffering, but is patiently to permit his coat to be taken from him, tho' that patience be the means of loſing his cloak alſo.

If Chriſtians will ſtill think that they may defend their rights, and enter into all *ſuch contentions* for them as the *laws* of the land will ſupport them in; if they

will think that they need bear *no other* injuries, but ſuch as courts of *law* cannot redreſs, they are as much miſtaken, as if they imagine, they need practiſe no other charity or worſhip of God, but ſuch as human laws demand.

For Chriſtian *meekneſs*, *ſelf-denial*, and *patience* under ſufferings, are no more to be formed by the ſtandard of human laws, than our devotion to God.

In theſe things Jeſus Chriſt is our *only law-giver*, and his laws are to be complied with as the certain terms of our ſalvation.

Notwithſtanding therefore we may be able either by perſonal power or legal contention to repel injuries, return evil for evil, and demand a *tooth* for a *tooth*; yet, as diſciples of Chriſt, we are to turn our cheek to the ſmiter, let him that would take our coat, have our cloak alſo, and be rather content to ſuffer many injuries, than, by defending ourſelves, raiſe our paſſions, embitter our tempers, and deſtroy that charity which we owe to our neighbour.

Now this *meekneſs* and *ſelf-denial* is highly ſuitable to the temper and ſpirit of Chriſtianity.

It is highly ſuitable to a religion that reſtores ſinners to God by *ſufferings*; it is ſuited to ſuch as have *forſaken all* to follow Chriſt; it is ſuited to ſuch as are to be *dead* and *crucified* to the world, to ſuch as are to be *meek* and *lowly* as Chriſt; it is ſuited to ſuch as are commanded to *love* and do all good to their moſt violent enemies, and who are to love their neighbour as themſelves.

And whatever pride, ſelf-love, or *human wiſdom* may ſuggeſt againſt this doctrine, may with equal ſtrength be objected againſt all thoſe other doctrines, which are thus of a ſpirit like unto it.

But let Chriſtians conſider, that it is of theſe doctrines of the *croſs*, that our Saviour ſaith, *Whoſoever ſhall be aſhamed of me and of my words, of him ſhall the Son of Man be aſhamed, when he ſhall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels.* Farther,

This is my commandment, ſaith Chriſt, *that ye love one*

another, as I have loved you. Now this as plainly forbids all ſtriſe and angry contentions with others, as when we are commanded to part with our coat, rather than contend for it. For it is as impoſſible to love our adverſary whilſt we are contending with him, as Chriſt loved us, as to follow Chriſt, and at the ſame time depart from him.

His love towards mankind (which is the example for our love) knew of no enemies, nor refuſed any ſufferings, but was a continual labour for the ſalvation of all men. If therefore we treat *any* perſons as our *enemies*, or fly in the face of thoſe who injure us, and are impatient under ſufferings, we are fallen from that love which is to govern all our actions.

Men may fancy what they pleaſe of the charity of their temper, whilſt they are reſiſting evil, and carrying on the contentions of law, as others may think they *have their converſation in heaven*, whilſt they are labouring after riches on earth; but if they would conſider, that Chriſtian charity is to be like the charity of Chriſt, who died for his enemies, they would ſoon find, that it muſt be a charity of another kind, that allows them to *contend* with their enemies.

Every contention of any kind is a quarrel, and neceſſarily begets ſome degrees of ſpight and ill will; and tho' they may often be carried on with ſome ſhew of *external decency*, yet the *inward temper* partakes of the contention, is tainted with ſome *little* and *ill-natur'd* reſentments, and deſtroys that divine ſpirit of love to which we are called.

So that to talk of charity with vexatious and contentious ſuits at law, is almoſt like talking of the charity of *duels*.

The only way therefore to preſerve our Chriſtian ſpirit, and ſhew ourſelves more like Chriſt, than thoſe who injure us, is to act as he did under injuries, and bear them with patience, for ſuch reaſons as rendered him patient. We are ſure that whilſt we follow him we follow the *way, the truth, and the life*; but as ſoon as we reſent and form deſigns of conquering our op-

preſſor

preſſor, we partake of his ſpirit, and offend againſt meekneſs and charity, as he offended againſt juſtice.

We muſt therefore bear with injuries and wrongs, not becauſe it is difficult to redreſs them, but becauſe it is difficult, and next to impoſſible, to reſiſt and contend with our adverſaries, without forfeiting that humility, meekneſs, and divine love, to which we are called.

We muſt ſuffer with patience, becauſe ſuch patience is an exerciſe of our ſelf-denial, that renders us more like our Lord and Maſter.

This cannot be doubted of, ſince we are told of our bleſſed Saviour, *That tho' he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he ſuffered.*

Now if this be true, is it not true in the ſame degree, that we are not only to bear ſufferings with patience, but even receive them with thankfulneſs, as proper means to teach us obedience to the laws of God?

For if he, who was a Son, who was without ſin, and ſo full of divine knowledge, yet received *inſtruction* from ſufferings; ſurely we, who are poor infirm creatures, muſt want that inſtruction which is to be learnt from them.

For to ſuppoſe, that we can be obedient to God without ſufferings, is to ſuppoſe, that we can do our duty without ſuch helps as the Son of God had. Sufferings are therefore to be conſidered amongſt the graces of God, which *purify* our ſouls, *enlighten* our minds with divine knowledge, and prepare us *to perfect holineſs in the fear of God.*

But how contrary to the ſpirit of Chriſt do we act, if our ſufferings provoke us into methods of *retaliation*, and inſtead of teaching us obedience to God, lead us into a ſtate of *enmity* towards our brethren?

Farther; it became him, ſaith the apoſtle, *for whom are all things, and by whom are all things in bringing many ſons unto glory, to make the captain of their ſalvation perfect through ſufferings.* (*a*)

We are here plainly taught not only that Chriſt was

(*a*) Heb. ii. 10.

made perfect through ſufferings, but that it was fit h
ſhould be made perfect that way, as the only way tha
could bring *many ſons unto glory.*

So that we ſee one end of Chriſt's ſufferings, befo
his being crowned with glory and honour, was
teach us, that ſufferings was the *way* to arrive at glo
ry, and that thoſe who deſire to be ſons of glor
muſt firſt be made perfect through ſufferings.

We therefore forget the nature of our religion,
miſtake the one great deſign of Chriſt's ſufferings,
go out of the road to glory, if we do not patien
ſubmit to ſufferings, if we are not thankful that
ſuffer with Chriſt, that we may reign with him.

Men in vain pretend that they only defend the
ſelves againſt *injuſtice.* For theſe are the very ha
ſhips which Chriſt ſuffered, and which they are,
they would be guided by his ſpirit, to ſuffer with
tience.

St. *Peter* ſpeaking to ſervants, ſaith, *This is tho
worthy, if a man for conſcience toward God en
grief ſuffering wrongfully. If when ye do well, and
fer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with
For even hereunto were ye called, becauſe Chriſt alſo ſuf
ed for us, leaving us an example that ye ſhould follow
ſteps.*

Here the apoſtle founds the duty of ſervants be
ſubject to maſters, that treat them *injuriouſly*, upon
common doctrine of Chriſtianity; becauſe, to ſu
wrongfully is thank-worthy before God, and bec
Chriſt's example has called us to bear with pati
thoſe injurious and wrongful hardſhips.

Let it therefore be carefully obſerved, that as ſur
the apoſtle here ſpeaks by the ſpirit of God, ſo ſu
it that our behaviour is not thank-worthy or accep
with God, unleſs we endure wrongful ſufferings
patience; and that if we lay aſide this meekneſs,
leave the example of Chriſt, who only ſaves ſuc
follow his ſteps.

I have now gone through ſeveral inſtances of
mortification, ſelf-denial and ſuffering, to which
Chriſtian world are called.

If the doctrines of this chapter ſeem hard and grievous, they can only ſeem ſo to ſuch as have wrong notions of human life.

Too many people imagine this life to be ſomething that is ſubſtantial in itſelf, and valuable for its own goods, and look upon religion as ſomething that is added to it, to make a worldly life more eaſy, regular and happy; and ſo embrace religion with no other ſpirit, nor to any farther degree, than as it complies with the eaſe, order and happineſs of that way of life in which they live.

Our bleſſed Saviour has fully confuted this opinion, by teaching us that there is but *one thing needful.* If therefore we are but ſo far Chriſtians, as to believe that what our Saviour has here taught, is ſtrictly true; then all the pretended grievances of ſelf-denial and ſuffering are all ſtruck off at once.

For what tho' meekneſs, patience and humility, may often make us ſufferers; yet if ſuch ſufferings make us only loſe ſuch things as are *not needful* for us, where is any ground for complaint?

But farther, ſuch ſufferings are not only without any real hurt; but they promote our happineſs, and become matter of real and ſolid joy.

Bleſſed are ye when men ſhall revile you and perſecute you, and ſhall ſay all manner of evil of you falſely for my ſake, rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven (*a*).

Chriſt does not endeavour to comfort us in this ſtate, as if it was a *hard* or *melancholy* ſtate, which we muſt bear, becauſe it is made eaſier with patience, or becauſe God has pleaſed to impoſe it upon us; but he looks at it in quite another view, not as needing comfort, but as having matter fit for congratulation.

What Chriſtians are they therefore, what ſtrangers to the ſpirit of Chriſt, who reckon thoſe things amongſt the hardſhips of religion, which Chriſt recommends to us as reaſons of *rejoicing*, and being *exceeding* glad?

The whole matter therefore plainly comes to this; if our ſufferings, our injuries or hardſhips, be ſuch as we

(*a*) Matth. v. 11.

we undergo, becauſe we dare not depart from that meekneſs, and patience, and charity, which Chriſt has taught, becauſe we had rather love our enemies, than be revenged on them, rather ſuffer like Chriſt, and be full of his ſpirit, than avoid ſufferings by a contrary temper, ſuch ſufferings are our greateſt gains.

If, on the contrary, you know of any meekneſs and patience which is not after the example of Chriſt, any injuries or ſufferings which you can reſiſt, and yet ſhew that you follow the example of Chriſt's patience, and meekneſs, and charity, the doctrine of this chapter has no recommendation of ſuch ſufferings.

You are only here exhorted to bear ſuch injuries and ſufferings as make you more like Chriſt, ſuch as are true inſtances of that meekneſs, patience and charity, which were the principal tempers of his ſpirit.

Now be the hardſhips or ſelf-denials what they will, if they make us more like to Chriſt, they have done more for us, than all the proſperity in the world can do; and he that defends himſelf at the expence of any temper, that was the temper of Chriſt, has done himſelf an injury greater than the worſt and moſt powerful of his enemies can bring upon him.

And all this is founded upon this one reaſon, becauſe there is but *one thing needful*, the ſalvation of our ſouls. It is this that changes the natures of all human things, and makes every thing good or evil only ſo far as it promotes or hinders this *one end* of life. The ſalvation of the world is the only happineſs of the world; and he that has ſecured his ſhare in that, has ſecured to himſelf all the joy and gladneſs that can befal human nature.

A Chriſtian therefore that is not content with ſalvation, that wants to add a worldly joy and pleaſure to the great things of religion, is more ſenſeleſs than the man that ſhould think he had hard uſage to be ſaved from a *ſhipwreck*, unleſs he was carried off upon a *cedar plank*.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

BEFORE I proceed any farther in other inſtances of ſelf-denial, it may be proper to ſhew in what the duty of ſelf-denial is founded, or wherein the reaſonableneſs and neceſſity of it conſiſts.

Every duty or virtue of the Chriſtian life is founded in truth and reaſon, and is required becauſe of its fitneſs to be done, and not becauſe God has power to command what he pleaſes.

If we are commanded to be meek and humble, it is becauſe meekneſs and humility are as true judgments, and as ſuitable to the truth of our ſtate, as it is a true judgment, and ſuitable to the ſtate of every dependant being, to be thankful for mercies.

If we are bid to rejoice, it is at ſomething that is truly joyful; if to fear, it is to fear ſomething that is really dreadful. Thus we are called to no tempers, but ſuch as are ſo many true judgments, and as truly grounded in the *nature* and *reaſon* of things, as if we were bid to believe *two* to be the half part of *four*.

God is reaſon and wiſdom itſelf, and he can no more call us to any tempers or duties, but ſuch as are ſtrictly reaſonable in themſelves, than he can act againſt himſelf, or contradict his own nature.

As we can ſay with aſſurance, that God cannot lye; ſo we may with the ſame certainty affirm, that he cannot enjoin any thing to rational creatures, that is contrary to the reaſon of their nature, no more than he can enjoin them, to love things that are not lovely, or hate things that are in their nature not hateful.

When God ſpeaks, we are as ſure that infinite reaſon ſpeaks, as we are ſure there is a God.

A little reflection upon this matter, will give us the moſt aſſurance in ſuch reaſonings as this.

As ſure therefore as there is a God, ſo ſure is it, that religion from God has only reaſonable commands to reaſonable creatures. No tempers can be impoſed upon us by way of *taſk* and *impoſition*, which we might reaſonably be without, if it was not required of us. God can only will, that reaſonable creatures ſhould

be

be more reaſonable, more perfect, and more like himſelf, and conſequently can enjoin us no duties or tempers of mind, but ſuch as have this tendency. All his commands are for our ſakes, founded in the neceſſities of our natures, and are only ſo many inſtructions to become more happy, than we could be without them.

A good man that enjoys the uſe of his reaſon, is offended at *madmen* and *fools*, becauſe they both act contrary to the reaſon of things. The *madman* fancies himſelf, and every thing about him, to be different from what they are; the *fool* knows nothing of the value of things, is ridiculous in his choices, and prefers a *ſhell* before the moſt uſeful things in life.

Now a good man merely thro' the love of reaſon, is offended at their conduct, and would do all that he could to abate the *frenzy* of the one, and the *ſtupidity* of the other.

Let this a little repreſent to us the conduct of God towards fallen man. God is *reaſon* itſelf; how highly therefore muſt he be offended at the follies and ſtupidity of mankind? If a *madman* ſeems ſo unreaſonable a creature to us, becauſe he fancies himſelf to be *ſomething* that he is not; how unreaſonable muſt fallen man, who is fallen from all true knowledge of himſelf, appear to him who is infinite reaſon?

Again, God is *goodneſs* itſelf; if therefore human goodneſs is inclined to endeavour the cure of *madmen* and *fools*, muſt not goodneſs itſelf be much more inclined to correct the madneſs and folly of fallen man?

We ſee that men are ſaid to be *mad*, when they fancy themſelves, and the things about them, to be different from what they are; they are ſaid to be *fools*, when they miſtake the *value* of things: now if this be true, as it moſt certainly is, it may ſerve to ſhew us, that man in his preſent ſtate of diſorder and ignorance muſt appear to God both as *fool* and *mad*; for every ſinner is truly *mad*, as he imagines himſelf, and all things about him, to be what they are not; he is really a *fool*, as he is ridiculous in his choices, and miſtakes *value* of things.

Now

Now religion is our *cure*, it is God's merciful communication of ſuch rules and diſcipline of life, as may ſerve to deliver us from the *infatuation* and *ignorance* of our fallen ſtate. It is to teach us the knowledge of ourſelves, and all things about us, that we may no longer act like madmen; it is to teach us the true *value* of things, that we may know our good and evil, and not be as *idiots* in the choice of things.

Now fools and madmen have their paradiſe, and are pleaſed with their imaginary happineſs; this makes them averſe from all methods of cure.

For this reaſon, God preſſes his inſtructions upon us with terrors and threatnings, and makes thoſe virtues which are the natural good and cure of our ſouls, ſuch duties to him, as he will puniſh the neglect of.

So that the power of God is mercifully employed to move us to ſuch a reaſonable way of life, as is neceſſary for our happineſs.

Some people are ſo weak, as to wonder, what we call ſin ſhould be ſo odious to God, or what it can ſignify to God, whether we are *wiſe* or *fooliſh*.

Let ſuch conſider, that God is *wiſdom*, and *reaſon* itſelf, and conſequently every thing that is contrary to reaſon and wiſdom, is contrary to his nature; ſo that a ſtate of ſin, is a ſtate of contrariety to God. To aſk therefore why God hates all ſin, is the ſame thing as to aſk why God cannot tell any ſort of *lye*; it is becauſe every deviation from truth is contrary to his nature, which is truth itſelf; ſo every inſtance of ſin, as it is an unreaſonable act, is contrary to his nature, who is *reaſon* itſelf.

There is therefore a neceſſity from the nature of things, that every creature be delivered from ſin, before it can enter into the beatifick preſence of God; for if God could reward wicked beings, and make them happy by the enjoyment of his preſence, he would as much ceaſe to act according to the nature of things, as if he ſhould puniſh a being that lived in innocence; for to puniſh innocence, and to reward ſin, are equally contrary to the *nature* and *reaſon* of things.

This

This obſervation may teach us to admire the excellency of the Chriſtian religion, which reſtores ſinners to God by ſo *great an atonement* for ſin, and which admits the *repentance* and devotion of fallen man, thro' the *merits* and *mediation* of the Son of God.

To return: Let ſuch people alſo conſider, that even reaſonable men have a neceſſary diſlike of fools and madmen, they cannot poſſibly make them the objects of their pleaſure and affection.

But now, if ſome things are ſo odious in themſelves, that even the reaſon of man cannot but abhor them, how much more odious, how much more contrary to the perfection of the Divine Nature, muſt the folly and madneſs of ſin be?

Thus if we conſider what reaſon is in ourſelves, that it neceſſarily diſlikes unreaſonable perſons as well as things; we may have ſome notion how all ſin and ſinners, that is, all beings which act contrary to *reaſon* muſt be in a ſtate of the utmoſt contrariety to God who is the *higheſt reaſon*.

God is love; yet it is certain, that he can only love ſuch things as are lovely; ſo God is *goodneſs*, yet he cannot make ſinners happy, becauſe there is as much contradiction to reaſon and perfection in making ſinners happy, as in loving things that are not truly lovely, or in hating things that are not hateful. This may ſerve to give us in ſome meaſure a true idea of the nature of religion and the nature of ſin.

That religion is God's gracious method of delivering us from the unreaſonableneſs and corruption of our natures, that by complying with its rules and diſcipline, we may be ſo altered in our natures, ſo reſtored to reaſon, as to be fit for the rewards of an infinite wiſe and perfect being.

That *ſin* is the miſery and diſorder, the madneſs and folly of our nature, which as neceſſarily ſeparates us from God, as God is contrary to all unreaſonableneſs.

I have juſt mentioned theſe things, to help us to conceive rightly what is meant by the reaſonableneſs

and neceſſity of thoſe tempers which religion requires. And I hope this is ſufficient to give any one a poſitive aſſurance, that religion is ſo far from being an impoſition upon us, conſiſting of needleſs duties, that it is founded in the nature and reaſon of things, and is as neceſſary to reſtore us to the enjoyment of God, as it is neceſſary that God ſhould love things according as they are lovely.

For let any one carefully conſider this propoſition, whether it be not abſolutely certain, that God loveth all things, accordingly as they are lovely. Is not this as certain, as that God is reaſon itſelf? could he be infinitely reaſonable, or reaſon in perfection, if he did not regard things according to their natures, hating only thoſe things that are truly hateful, and loving things ſo far as they are lovely? to act by any other rule, than the reaſon and nature of things, is to act by humour and caprice.

Let this therefore teach us, that as we are in ourſelves, ſo we are neceſſarily either odious or acceptable to God.

So far as we ceaſe from ſin, and ſuffer ourſelves to be made wiſe and reaſonable by the wiſdom and reaſon of religion; ſo far we make ourſelves objects of the love of that infinitely perfect being, who neceſſarily loves beings, as they are lovely in their nature.

And ſo far as we continue in the madneſs and folly of ſin, and neglect the rules of religion, which would deliver us from the guilt and ſlavery of it; ſo far we make it neceſſary for that perfect being to hate us, who cannot but hate things accordingly as they are in themſelves hateful.

Some people, either through ſelf-love, or ſome confus'd opinion of God and themſelves, are always applying themſelves to be *particular* favourites of God, explaining all their little ſucceſſes, or bleſſings in their health and circumſtances above other people, to be diſtinguiſhing marks of God's *particular* kindneſs towards them.

But ſuch perſons muſt conſider, that God is *reaſon* itſelf, that he is ſubject to no *particular* fondneſs, no more

more than he is capable of weakneſs; and that he ca
no more love them with any *particular* love, that is no
an act of the higheſt reaſon, than he can lye, or a
contrary to the truth.

They ſhould conſider, that the things of this lif
its ſucceſſes and proſperities, are ſo far from being mar
of God's particular favour, that afflictions have a muc
better claim to it; *for whom the Lord loveth he chaſte*
eth, &c.

When ſuch people fancy themſelves in the *particu*
favour of God, they ſhould conſider, that to be lov
by God, is to be loved by *infinite reaſon* and wiſdom
and that reaſon can only love or approve things as th
are conformable to it. To be approved by reaſon, w
muſt act conformably to reaſon; and to be approv
by the higheſt reaſon, we muſt act conformably to t
higheſt reaſon.

So that when our lives are conformable to the high
reaſon, then may we believe that ſo far as they are u
ſo far are they in the favour of God, who is the high
reaſon. To fancy that any thing elſe can make us
vourites of God, is mere ignorance and pride, and o
ing to the ſame vanity and ſelf-love, which makes ſo
people think that they are admired and eſteemed by
that know them.

For ſo ſure as God is reaſon itſelf, ſo ſure is it, t
to be loved by God, and to be approved by the high
reaſon, is the ſame thing; ſo that if he, whoſe lif
not conformable to the higheſt reaſon, imagines that
is particularly beloved by God, he is guilty of the ſa
abſurdity, as if he believed that God is not the high
reaſon, or reaſon in perfection.

It is not more certain that there is but one God, t
it is certain that there is but one way of making o
ſelves objects of his love; namely, by conforming
acting according to the higheſt reaſon. When our li
are agreeable to reaſon and the nature of things, t
are our lives agreeable to God.

Now ſo far as we act conformably to religion, ſo
we act according to the higheſt reaſon, and draw n
to God, by a wiſdom that comes from God, and
revea

evealed unto us, that it might make us ſuch reaſonable eings, as to be fit objects of his eternal love.

For a religion from God, muſt be according to the ature of God, requiring no other change of thoughts r actions, but ſuch as is conformable to truth and eaſon.

Now the reaſonableneſs of actions conſiſts in their fitneſs to be done; there is a reaſonableneſs in being hankful for mercies; there is a reaſonableneſs in rejoicng at things that are joyful; and ſo in all other actions r tempers they are either reaſonable or unreaſonable, they are agreeable or contrary to the nature of things.

This is what I would have underſtood by the reaſonbleneſs of all religious duties or tempers; they are all quired, becauſe they are as ſuitable to the nature and aſon of things, as it is ſuitable to the reaſon of things be thankful for mercies, or fear things that are truly readful.

Thus, for inſtance, humility is nothing elſe but a *ght judgment* of ourſelves, and is only ſo far enjoined, it is ſuitable to the truth of our ſtate; for to think orſe of ourſelves than we really are, is no more a virue, than to take *five* to be leſs than *four*.

On the contrary, he that is proud, offends as much ainſt truth and reaſon, and judges as falſely of himf, as the *madman*, who fancies himſelf to be a king, d the *ſtraw* to which he is chained, to be a *throne* ſtate.

Having obſerved thus much concerning the reaſonbleneſs of tempers or duties which religion demands, proceed now to ſhew wherein the reaſonableneſs and eceſſity of ſelf-denial conſiſts.

If a perſon was to walk upon a *rope* croſs ſome great er, and he was bid to deny himſelf the pleaſure of ncing on it, or looking about at the beauty of the ves, or liſtening to the noiſe of ſailors; if he was mmanded to deny himſelf the advantage of *fiſhing* by way; would there be any hardſhip in ſuch ſelf-del? would not ſuch ſelf-denials be as reaſonable, as mmanding him to love things that will do him good, to avoid things that are dangerous.

Streight

Streight is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, ſaith our bleſſed Saviour. Now, if Chriſtians are to walk in a *narrow way that leadeth to eternal life*, the chief buſineſs of a Chriſtian muſt be to deny himſelf all thoſe things which may either ſtop or lead him out of his narrow way. And if they think that pleaſures and indulgences are conſiſtent with their keeping this narrow way, they think as reaſonable, as if the man upon the rope ſhould think, that he muſt dance on it, or ſtop in his way to catch fiſh.

Again, If a man that was a ſlave to ſottiſhneſs and ſtupifying pleaſures, that rendered him averſe from all exerciſes of the mind, was yet obliged, in order to ſave his life, to attain to ſuch or ſuch a degree of mathematical knowledge; muſt it not be as neceſſary for ſuch a one to deny himſelf thoſe indulgences which increaſe his ſtupidity, as it would be neceſſary to ſtudy the relations of figures?

Now this is the foundation of all Chriſtian ſelf-denial. we are born and bred in ſlavery to ſin and corrupt tempers, and are only to be ſaved by putting off this old man, and being renewed in holineſs and purity of life. The denials therefore of religion are only the neceſſary means of ſalvation, as they are neceſſary to leſſen the corruption of our nature, deſtroy our old habits, alter the taſte and temper of our minds, and prepare us to reliſh and aſpire after holineſs and perfection.

For ſince our ſouls are in a ſtate of corruption, and our life is a ſtate of probation, in order to alter and remove this corruption, it is certain that every thing and every way of life, which nouriſhes and increaſes our corruption, is as much to be avoided, as thoſe things, which beget in us purity and holineſs, are to be ſought after.

A man that wants his health, is as well, and for the ſame reaſons, to avoid ſuch things as nouriſh his illneſs as he is to take medicines that have a healing quality. Self-denial is therefore as eſſential to the Chriſtian life as prayer is; it being equally neceſſary to deny ourſelves ſuch things as ſupport our corruption, as it is

ceſſary to pray for thoſe things which will do us ood, and purify our natures.

The whole of the matter is this: Chriſtians are alled from a ſtate of diſorder, ſin and ignorance, to a ate of reſemblance of the Divine Nature. If there- ore there are any things, or any ways that corrupt our inds, ſupport our vanity, increaſe our blindneſs, or ouriſh ſenſuality; all theſe are as neceſſarily to be voided, as it is neceſſary to be holy.

If there are any denials or mortifications that purify d enlighten the ſoul, that leſſen the power of bodily aſſions, that raiſe us to a heavenly affection, and make taſte and reliſh the things that be of God; theſe are neceſſarily to be practiſed, as it is neceſſary to believe Jeſus Chriſt.

So that the matter comes to this: if there are no in- lgences in *eating* that do us harm, then *faſting* is of uſe; but if there are, if they enſlave the ſoul, and ve it a ſenſual taſte, then we are as much obliged to ſtain from what does us this harm, as we are obliged pray for any thing that can do us good.

No Chriſtian, that knows any thing of the goſpel, n doubt whether *faſting* be a common duty of Chriſti- ity, ſince our Saviour hath placed it along with ſecret ns and private prayer. *When thou faſteſt, anoint thy d, and waſh thy face, that thou appear not unto men to , but to thy Father which is in ſecret, and thy Father ich ſeeth in ſecret ſhall reward thee openly.* (a)

So that the ſame inſtructions, and the ſame reaſons given for *private faſting* as for *ſecret alms* and private *yer, that thy Father which ſeeth in ſecret may reward e openly.* Now as it is manifeſtly entituled to the ſame ward, it is manifeſtly put upon the ſame foot as pri- te prayer, and as equally acceptable to God.

Eating and drinking are the common ſupport of life; t then as they are the ſupport of a corrupt life, the uriſhment of a diſordered body that weighs down the l, whoſe appetites and tempers are in a ſtate of en- y with the life and purity of the ſoul; it is neceſſary, that

(a) Matt. vii. 15.

that we take care ſo to ſupport the life of the body, as not to occaſion the ſickneſs and death of the ſoul.

The fall of man conſiſts very much in the fall of the ſoul into the dominion and power of the body, whoſe joy, and health, and ſtrength, is often the ſlavery, weakneſs, and infirmity of the ſoul.

How far our bodies affect our habits or ways of thinking, may be ſeen by the difference between ſickneſs and health, youth and old age. Theſe different ſtates of the body alter the whole turn of our minds, and give us new ways of thinking, all owing to the different ſtrength of bodily appetites and tempers. No ſooner is the body weakened by any occaſion, but the ſoul is more at liberty, ſpeaks higher for itſelf, and begins to act more reaſonably.

What is the reaſon that a *midnight* reflection goes generally deeper than a thought at any other time? no reaſon can be well aſſigned, but the peace and tranquillity of the body, which gives the ſoul a liberty of ſeeing farther into things, than at any other time.

The difference between the ſame man full and faſting, is almoſt the difference of two perſons; a man that in the morning finds himſelf fit for any meditation is, after a full meal, changed into another creature, fit only for idle amuſements, or the yawnings of an animal.

He has not only created a dulneſs of his ſoul, but has perverted its taſte; for he can be pleaſed with *romance* or *impertinent* hiſtory, at the ſame time that he has no reliſh for a book of devotion that requires ſome attention.

I mention this to ſhew, that *faſting* has a nearer relation to all *religious* tempers than is generally thought, and that indulgent or full feeding does not only dull the mind, but more particularly gives it a dulneſs towards the things of religion. If it were not thus, a book of religious reflections would be as acceptable at ſuch times, as thoſe other books which require as much or more attention.

And the reaſon of this is plain, becauſe all our temper and deſires are always ſuitable to the ſtate we are in; if we are in a ſtate of a ſenſual joy, feeling the

ppineſs of a *full ſtomach* and *heated blood*, we reliſh or ire nothing but what ſuits with it. For this reaſon *ys*, and *romances*, and vain diverſions, can entertain nan that has eat as long as he could; but lectures on *morality*, or diſcourſes upon *death* and *judgment*, uld tire him into ſleep. What we obſerve of the *ndice*, that it makes us ſee all things *yellow*, is in a tain degree true of every *ſtate* of the body; it kes us conceive things with ſome degree of likeneſs he condition it is then in. Every alteration in the y, gives ſome alteration to our way of conceiving ſame things.

As he therefore, that would ſee things in their pro- colours, muſt firſt cure himſelf of the *jaundice*; ſo that would apprehend things according to their na- s, muſt take care that his body be ſo ordered, as ave as little a ſhare as poſſible in his judgment.

When a man has his ſtomach full of wind, and feels pleaſant enjoyment of his body, you can hardly poſe any thing to him that will appear reaſonable: but ſtay till his ſtomach is altered, till he has had ll and chearful meal, and he will be as naturally better temper as any other animal that has filled belly.

When men have been unreaſonably out of temper ugh the mere motions of the body, I believe they n condemn themſelves afterwards; but then they ot conſider, that the contrary ſtate is a ſtate of the ſlavery to the blind motions of the body, and e to the ſame condemnation. For if a *full* and *ſant* meal makes us ſo *gay* and *chearful*, as to laugh be pleaſed with the *vaineſt things*, we are then unreaſonable, and mere ſlaves to our bodies, as n a *cold* or *empty* ſtomach ſhall make us angry at y thing.

or it is as great a contradiction to reaſon and wiſ- , to be pleaſed with things or perſons, becauſe body is in a ſtate of joy, as it is to be angry, and eaſed at things or perſons, becauſe an eaſterly d, or an indigeſted meal has ſoured our ſpirits.

ow both theſe ſtates are equally ſtates of ſlavery

to

to the body, equally expoſe our folly, and have th
ſame contrariety to religion. A man is as far from re
ligious wiſdom, when *full feeding* has made him merry
vain and *trifling*, as when a *contrary ſtate* of body make
him *ſour*, *angry* and *fretful*.

It is the buſineſs therefore of religion, to put a
end to theſe ſtates of ſlavery, to deliver man from the
blind laws of *fleſh* and *blood*, and give him a wiſdom an
conſtancy, a ſtate and judgment ſuitable to the reaſo
and wiſdom of the laws of God; to fill our ſouls wi
ſuch principles of peace, as may give us habits of tra
quillity, ſuperior to the changeable tempers of ou
bodies.

Now *faſting*, as it is a denial of *bodily indulgences*,
it diſciplines the body into a ſtate of obedience, a
contradicts its appetites, is the moſt conſtant and u
verſal means of procuring liberty and freedom of mi

For it is the love of our body, and too much care
its enjoyments, that makes us too ſenſible of its d
mands, and ſubject to its tempers. Whatever
nouriſh and cheriſh, ſo far gains an intereſt in us, a
rules us in the ſame degree, that it has got our affec
ons. Till therefore religion has entered us into
ſtate of ſelf-denial, we live in a ſtate that ſupports
ſlavery and corruption of our natures.

For every indulgence of the body in eating a
drinking is adding to its power, and making all o
ways of thinking ſubſervient to it.

A man that makes every day, a day of *full* a
chearful meals, will by degrees make the happineſs
every day depend upon it, and conſider every thi
with regard to it.

He will go to *church*, or ſtay at home, as it fa
with his *dinner*, and not ſcruple to tell you, that he
nerally eats too heartily to go to the afternoon-ſervi

Now ſuch people are under a worſe diſorder
body, than he that has the *jaundice*, and have th
judgment more perverted, than he that ſees all thi
yellow.

For how can they be ſaid to perceive the differe
of things, who have more taſte for the preparati

the *kitchen*, than for the joys and comforts of the ouſe of God, who chuſe rather to make themſelves *fit* for divine ſervice, than to baulk the pleaſure of a *ll meal?* and this not by chance, or upon ſome unſual occaſion, but by a conſtant intended courſe of life.

Let ſuch people deal faithfully with themſelves, and arch out their ſpirit. Can they think that they are *rn again of God*, that they have the *ſpirit of Chriſt*, who thus ſubject to the pleaſures of *gluttony?* can they ſaid to treat their bodies as *temples* of the Holy Ghoſt o make them *unfit* for the holy ſervice of publick orſhip? can they be ſaid to offer their bodies unto od as a *reaſonable*, *holy*, and *living* ſacrifice? can they ſaid to *love God with all their heart, and all their ſoul*, to have *forſaken all* to follow Chriſt, who will not much as forſake *half a meal* for the ſake of divine orſhip?

I Know it will be thought too ſevere that I have cal- this *gluttony*, becauſe it is the practice of numbers people of worth and reputation; but I hope they ll turn their diſlike of the name into a diſlike of the ng, for it is as certainly *gluttony*, as picking of poc- is ſtealing.

The ſin of *gluttony* is the ſin of over-eating, of be- too much given to full meals. Now this may be cult in ſome inſtances to ſtate exactly; yet he that s he eats ſo much as to render him *indiſpoſed* for the blick worſhip of God, has determined againſt him- and put his own caſe out of all queſtion: For if re be ſuch a ſin, as the ſin of over-eating, it muſt rely then be committed when we eat too much to end upon the ſervice of the church.

Men may fancy that they are only chargeable with *ony*, who eat till they *ſurfeit* their bodies; they may k thoſe only guilty of *drunkenneſs*, who drink till have loſt their ſenſes: but there is a much ſurer to go by, given them by the ſpirit of God; *Whe- ye eat or drink, or whatſoever ye do, do all to the glory od.* All therefore in eating and drinking, that is within the bounds of the glory of God, is offered mething that is not the glory of God; it is offered

to the corruption and ſenſuality of our natures; it is the ſin of intemperance, and has the ſin of indevotion added to it, when it is indulged at a time, that keeps us from the publick worſhip of God.

Let ſuch people examine their own hearts, and ſee what opinion they have of divine ſervice. Can they look upon it as doing God's will on earth as it is done in heaven? can they look upon it as entering into the preſence of God, as approaching the throne of grace? can they eſteem it to be the nouriſhment and ſupport of their ſouls, a neceſſary means of ſecuring the divine aſſiſtance as a moſt acceptable way of pleaſing God and ſecuring their eternal happineſs, who are not afraid to eat and drink till they are indiſpoſed and unwilling to attend at it? if they ſtill have juſt notions of the nature of divine ſervice, let them think of the words of our bleſſed Saviour, *If ye know theſe things happy are ye if ye do them.*

But if they look upon it as of leſs concern than a *full meal*, if they think that there is no occaſion for exactneſs in it, it is time they were told, that they have *not the love of God abiding in them.*

For if they did really *hunger and thirſt after righteouſneſs*, which is the true love of God, they would rejoice at every opportunity of entering farther into his favour; they would go to the houſe of God, the abode of his preſence, with more joy than to any other place, and think thoſe days the moſt happy, that were moſt devoted to the cares and joys of a life with God to all eternity.

They would cut off a *right hand*, or pluck out a *right eye*, rather than be hindred from thoſe helps which are to raiſe their hope, enliven their faith, and form their ſouls to a delight and joy in God.

If they want this zeal towards God, they want that zeal, which is the life and ſpirit of a Chriſtian, which diſtinguiſhes a diſciple of Chriſt from thoſe who live without God in the world.

I have ſpoke the more home to this point, becauſe it is ſo allowed a practice, which as unavoidably

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ſtroys the true ſpirit and temper of religion, as any things that are notoriouſly ſinful.

Indeed a conſtant courſe of full feeding is the death of the ſoul, and every day, that is a day of ſuch happineſs, is a day loſt to religion.

When a man has rejoiced himſelf with full eating and drinking, he is like any other *animal*, diſpos'd only to *play* or *idleneſs*. He has no more feeling of ſin than he has of *hunger*, can no more perceive himſelf to be a *miſerable fallen* creature, than he can perceive himſelf to be a *beggar*, and conſequently is no more affected with any *forms of confeſſion* or repentance, than if he was every day to confeſs that he was a *ſtarving beggar*.

For this courſe of *ſelf-enjoyment* is as contrary to humility, contrition, and a true ſenſe of ſin, as it is contrary to a ſtate of *beggary and want*; and conſequently a man in ſuch happineſs, can no more ſincerely deplore the *weight of ſin*, than he can feel himſelf in the *miſery of poverty*.

If therefore religion is to be the ſtate and temper of our minds; if it is to be the ruling taſte and reliſh of our ſouls; if its goods and evils are to govern our actions, it is as neceſſary to renounce ſenſuality, and mortify our bodies, as it is neceſſary to reſiſt temptations. For abſtinence or ſelf-denial is not only a good, adviſable, and reaſonable practice, but is a conſtant, neceſſary, and univerſal duty, and enters farther into the cure of our ſouls than any other practice. It is as neceſſary for a Chriſtian, that would get rid of the diſorders of his nature, and leſſen the weight of ſin, as it is neceſſary for a man in a *dropſy* to abſtain from *drink*, or a man in a *fever* to refrain from ſuch things as *inflame* his blood.

Indeed this ſelf-denial is the chief and moſt general exerciſe of the Chriſtian life, and is the *form* and *ſubſtance* of every virtue; for ſo far as we deny our natural tempers, ſo far we ſeem to be advanced in virtue.

We are ſo far humble, as we deny ourſelves in the inſtances of pride; ſo far heavenly-minded, as we deny our earthly inclinations; ſo far charitable, as we

deny our tempers of ſelf-love and envy; and ſo in every virtue, it ſeems to have its chief foundation in the denial of ſome corrupt temper of our natures.

I know ſome people object, that *faſting* is not an *univerſal* duty, that it is rather like ſome particular *medicine* or *remedy*, that is only neceſſary for ſome particular caſes, and particular conſtitutions.

To this it may be anſwered, that if by *faſting* is meant an entire abſtinence from all food for ſuch or ſuch a certain ſpace of time, that faſting in that ſenſe is not an univerſal and conſtant duty. But then it ought to be obſerved, that this is no more the nature of faſting, than any *particular form* of confeſſion, of ſuch or ſuch a length, is the preciſe nature of repentance.

For as repentance does not conſiſt in any ſtated fixed degrees of ſorrow and pain for ſin, which is to be the *common* repentance for *all* men, in *all* ſtates, and at *all* times; but is ſuch an exerciſe of grief and contrition, as is ſuited to every one's particular ſtate: ſo *faſting* is not any *fixed degree* of abſtinence from *all* food, which is to be the *common* meaſure of faſting to *all* men in *all* ſtates, and at *all* times; but is ſuch an exerciſe of abſtinence and ſelf-denial, as is proper to every one's particular ſtate.

Now if we underſtand faſting in this ſenſe, in which it ought to be underſtood, as an abſtinence from ſuch food and ſuch pleaſures and degrees of feeding, as are proper in every ſtate of life to deſtroy ſenſuality, leſſen the corruption of our natures, and make us reliſh and taſte ſpiritual enjoyments; in this ſenſe, faſting is as *conſtant and univerſal* a duty as repentance.

For as repentance is an univerſal duty; becauſe the reaſon of it is common to all men; ſo this faſting is neceſſary to all men; becauſe ſenſuality, fleſhly luſts and the corruption of bodily tempers, is the *univerſal* corruption of all men.

It is ſometimes alſo objected, that faſting cannot be an univerſal duty, becauſe ſome people's conſtitutions will not ſuffer them to eat enough for their health.

To this it may be anſwered, that ſome people may be ſo infirm, that they cannot attend at the *public worſhip*

worſhip of God, yet ſurely publick worſhip is an *univerſal* duty, tho' ſome people's conſtitutions may make them incapable of going to it.

Secondly, This objection is only of weight againſt faſting, as it ſignifies an entire abſtinence from all food for a certain ſpace of time, but is of no force againſt ſuch an abſtinence, as I have ſhewn to be the *common duty* of all Chriſtians.

Thirdly, Perſons of weak and infirm conſtitutions, have often as much neceſſity of ſelf-denial, as others of the moſt healthful bodies; for their very ſtate, it may be, has taught them indulgence; by being accuſtomed to ſo much care of themſelves, they become no better than perpetual nurſes of themſelves, and conſequently are too much devoted to that which is not the *one thing needful.*

Weakly people may as well be *Epicures*, and have the ſame *ſenſuality* to conquer, as other people; and conſequently, have the ſame neceſſity of their degree of abſtinence and denial, that others have.

Let ſuch people have recourſe to the examples of *Timothy*, who was an apoſtolical biſhop. His hiſtory teaches us, that he was weakly, and ſubject to frequent infirmities; who notwithſtanding he may be ſuppoſed to have enjoyed the *extraordinary* gifts of the Holy Ghoſt; yet in this ſtate of divine greatneſs, and bodily weakneſs, he wanted the *authority* and *advice* of an apoſtle, to perſuade him to drink any thing beſides water. This we are ſufficiently taught, by the apoſtle's giving this advice in his epiſtle to him, *Drink no longer water*, that is, nothing but water, *but uſe a little wine for thy ſtomach's ſake, and thine often infirmities.*

Laſtly, The world abounds with people who are weakly and tender merely by their indulgences; they have bad nerves, low ſpirits, and frequent indiſpoſitions, thro' irregularity, idleneſs, and indulgence.

Now theſe people, it is true, are not *fit for faſting*, and perhaps, if they were to deal faithfully with themſelves, they would find that they are as unfit for moſt other exerciſes of religion: and conſequently, if their condition might be pleaded as an objection againſt the

neceſſity of faſting, it might as well be pleaded againſt the neceſſity of half the duties of Chriſtianity.

Upon the whole matter it appears, that faſting is a conſtant univerſal duty, and that it is liable to no other exceptions, than ſuch as are common to ſeveral other great duties of religion.

It is no *fix'd degree* of ſorrow, that is the common repentance of all men; it is no *particular ſum* of money, that is the common charity of all men; it is no *fix'd form*, or *length*, or *hour* of prayer, that is the common devotion of all men; yet all theſe are *conſtant* and *univerſal* duties.

In like manner, tho' *faſting* may be ſubject to all the ſame variations, yet is it a *conſtant* and *univerſal* duty.

Juſtus is a grave ſober man, he is very angry at thoſe people who neglect or ridicule *faſting*; he thinks they know nothing of religion.

Thus far *Juſtus* is very right, and knowing thus much, one would wonder that he is ſo inconſiſtent with himſelf; for preſently after this, *Juſtus* will tell you, that he never faſts but upon *Good-Friday*, and the *Thirtieth of January*.

If *Juſtus* had lived before the murder of king *Charles*, he had had but one faſt in the year, yet in all likelihood, he would have then ſtood up for the *doctrine* of faſting.

If a man was to be angry at thoſe who neglect or deſpiſe the *ſervice of the church*, as people that know nothing of religion, and then tell you, that he himſelf never goes thither, but on *Good Friday* and the *Thirtieth of January*; you would ſay that he knew nothing of the nature of church-ſervice.

Now *Juſtus* ſhews the ſame ignorance of the nature of *faſting*.

For if prayer and repentance, and the *ſervice* of the church, were not *common acts* of devotion, and right and neceſſary ways of worſhipping God, they would not be neceſſary upon *Good-Friday*, or any other particular day.

In like manner, unleſs *faſting* was a *common* and *neceſſary* part of religion, ſomething that was always a proper

proper means of applying to God, it would neither be *neceſſary*, nor *acceptable*, on thoſe particular days.

For it is not the day that makes the duty to be *neceſſary*, but the day happens to be a *proper* occaſion of exerciſing a neceſſary duty.

Some great *calamity* happens to you, you do very well to make it an occaſion of exerciſing great devotion; but if you ſtay till ſome other calamity happens, before you pray again, or think that prayer is only *proper* in times of *calamity*, you know nothing of devotion.

It is the ſame thing in *faſting*; ſome great occaſion may juſtly call you to it; but if you forbear faſting till ſuch great occaſions happen again, or think that faſting is only *proper* for ſuch *publick occaſions*, you know nothing of the nature of faſting.

If *Juſtus* was to ſay that he never *repents* but on thoſe publick days, he might as eaſily defend himſelf, as when he ſays, he only *faſts* on thoſe times.

For is there any benefit in faſting on thoſe particular days? Does it add any thing to your piety and devotion? Does it make your repentance and ſorrow for ſin more real and affecting? Does it calm and abate your paſſions, leſſen the power of your body, and put you in a better ſtate of devotion, than when you take your uſual meals? If it has not ſomething of this effect, where is the uſe of it at ſuch times, when you would have your devotions the beſt performed? And if it has this effect, how comes it that you will have but one or two ſuch days in the year? Why will you not thus affect your ſouls, thus aſſiſt your devotions, thus diſcipline your body, thus allay your paſſions, thus raiſe your heart, thus humble your ſelf, till the *day* comes, on which king *Charles* was murdered? Is not this like ſtaying till then before you *repent?*

Our bleſſed Saviour ſaith, *But thou, when thou faſteſt, anoint thine head, and waſh thy face, that thou appear not unto men to faſt, but unto thy Father which is in ſecret, and thy Father which is in ſecret ſhall reward thee openly.* (*a*)

Here our Saviour's advice relates wholly to *private faſting*, to which other people are to be ſtrangers, to

(*a*) Matt. vi. 17.

ſuch a faſting as is a ſecret ſervice to God, who will therefore highly reward it. Yet *Juſtus* tells you, that he *faſts* only twice in the year, and that on *publick* days. Now what is this to be called? Is it weakneſs or perverſeneſs?

If you was to aſk me, whether *frequent private* prayer be a neceſſary duty, I ſhould think it ſufficient to read to you the following paſſage, *But thou, when thou prayeſt, enter into thy cloſet, and when thou haſt ſhut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in ſecret, and thy Father which ſeeth in ſecret, ſhall reward thee openly.*

Nothing need be added to this authority; the neceſſity and advantage of private prayers is here ſo expreſly taught, that there is no room left to doubt about it.

Juſtus really acknowledges all this; how comes it then, *Juſtus*, that you know nothing of the neceſſity and advantage of *private faſting?* How comes it, that the ſame authority and the ſame words do not teach you as much in one place as in another? Has not our Saviour expreſſed himſelf exactly in the ſame manner, and given the ſame advice, and propoſed the ſame reward to private faſting, as to private prayer?

Farther, when the diſciples of our Lord could not caſt the evil ſpirit out of a man that was a *lunatick*, he not only tells them, that it was thro' want of faith, but alſo gives them a very important inſtruction in theſe words, *Howbeit this kind goeth not out, but by prayer and faſting.* (*b*)

Now does this look as if faſting was an occaſional thing, only for a day or two in the year? Is it ranked with prayer, as having the ſame *common nature*, as being equally prevailing with God? And is not this ſufficient to teach us, that we muſt think of faſting, as we think of prayer; that it is a proper way of devotion, a right method of applying to God? And if that prayer is moſt prevailing, and enters fartheſt into heaven which is attended with faſting, it is a proof enough ſurely, that faſting is to be a common ordinary part of our devotion.

It is ſufficient and powerful enough to caſt out *devils*, and cure *lunaticks*, and ſhall we neglect it, when we pray

(*b*) Matt. xvii. 21.

pray againſt the evil tempers and paſſions which poſſeſs our hearts? Shall we not pray to God in the moſt powerful prevailing manner that we can?

If we were to faſt without praying, would not this be a way of worſhip of our own Invention? And if we pray and neglect faſting, is it not equally chuſing a worſhip of our own? For he that has taught us the uſe and advantage of prayer, has in the ſame words taught us the ſame things of faſting, and has alſo joined them together, as having the ſame power with God.

If therefore *Juſtus* will take his religion from ſcripture, he muſt own, that faſting is of the nature of prayer, that it has the ſame authority from Chriſt, and that he, who only faſts on a publick day or two in a year, no more obſerves the whole duty of Chriſtian faſting, than he, who only attends ſome publick yearly days of prayer, can be ſaid to fulfil the whole duty of Chriſtian devotion.

To proceed: We may alſo obſerve, that the reaſon of ſelf-denial and abſtinence is conſtant and perpetual, becauſe we are perpetually united to a body, that is more or leſs fit to join with our ſouls in acts of holineſs, according to the ſtate that it is in.

As therefore it is always neceſſary to take care what thoughts and inclinations we indulge in our minds; ſo it is equally neceſſary, that we be conſtantly careful how we alter the ſtate of our bodies, or indulge them in ſuch gratifications, as may make them leſs fit for the purpoſes of an holy life.

For ſince there are *ſtates* of the body which favour holineſs and theſe *ſtates* depend much upon our manner of living, it is abſolutely neceſſary that we avoid every degree of indulgence, every kind of irregularity and idleneſs, or other courſe of life, that may make our bodies leſs *active*, leſs *pure*, and leſs *conformable* to the duties of religion.

And this is to be done, as I ſaid before, not only as a reaſonable and adviſeable thing, but as of the utmoſt neceſſity; it being as eſſential to holineſs, to purify our bodies, and practiſe a ſtrict temperance, as it is neceſſary to practiſe a ſtrict charity.

Now Chriſtian temperance is no more that which may paſs for temperance in the ſight of men, than Chriſtian charity is that which is viſible to the world.

A worldly man may think himſelf ſufficiently temperate, when he only abſtains from ſuch exceſſes, as may make him fitter to enjoy an healthful *ſenſuality*.

But Chriſtian temperance is of quite another nature, and for other ends; it is to put the body into a ſtate of *purity* and *ſubmiſſion*, and give the ſoul a divine and heavenly taſte.

It is therefore to be obſerved, that Chriſtian temperance is never enough practiſed, but when it puts the body in the fitteſt ſtate for devotion, and other acts of holineſs: When our bodies have all that good done to them, have all that purification, and right tempers, which abſtinence and ſelf-denial can give them; then do we practiſe Chriſtian temperance.

There is no other rule than this to go by; for ſince Chriſtian temperance is in order to holineſs, purity, and heavenly affection, he can only be ſaid to be *truly* temperate, whoſe temperance is moſt ſerviceable to the *higheſt* degrees of holineſs.

And to ſtop ſhort of any known degrees of temperance, is like ſtopping ſhort of any known degrees of charity. It is therefore as neceſſary to practiſe all the exerciſes of ſelf-denial and ſtrict abſtinence, as it is neceſſary to aſpire after real holineſs.

For as our bodies are conſtant, and home-enemies, and have a mighty influence in all our actions; ſo far as we preſerve them in a ſtate ſuitable to holineſs, ſo far we preſerve ourſelves fit for the exerciſe of religion.

It is out of all queſtion, that there is a purity and impurity of our bodies, as well as of our ſouls; that is, there are ſome ſtates and tempers of our bodies, that favour and incline to acts of virtue, and others that as much incline to all ſorts of ſenſuality.

This is as certain, as that *gluttony* and *drunkenneſs* diſpoſes men to all ſorts of ſin, and gives them a diſreliſh for all kinds of holineſs. For as theſe ſtates of life have the utmoſt contrariety to religion; ſo every *approach*

proach towards them is, in a *certain degree*, partaking of them.

A man that lives in ſuch a ſtate, as not to be called either a *glutton*, or a *drunkard*, may yet be ſo near them, as to partake of thoſe tempers and inclinations, which are the effects of gluttony and drunkenneſs.

For there are ſuch degrees in theſe as in other ways of life. A man may be vain and uncharitable, yet not ſo as to be remarkable for his vanity and uncharitableneſs; ſo he may be alſo under the guilt and evil effects of eating and drinking, tho' not ſo as to be eſteemed either a glutton or intemperate.

So that the only ſecurity for a Chriſtian, is to make it the care of his life to reſiſt all enjoyments that cheriſh vanity and uncharitableneſs, not only in ſuch degrees as are *ſcandalous* and *viſible* in the eyes of men, but ſuch as *inwardly* hurt the humility and charity of his mind.

In like manner as to eating and drinking, he is conſtantly to practiſe ſuch abſtinence as may ſecure him not only from ſenſuality in the ſight of the world, but ſuch as may beſt *alter*, *purify* and *humble* his body, and make it the holy habitation of a ſoul devoted to a ſpiritual life.

St. *Paul* ſaith, *I therefore ſo run, not as uncertainly; ſo fight I, not as one that beateth the air. But I keep under my body, and bring it into ſubjection, leſt that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myſelf ſhould be a caſt-away.* (*a*)

Let it here be obſerved, that the apoſtle practiſed this ſelf-denial and mortification, not only as a good and adviſeable thing, and ſuitable to holineſs, but as of the laſt neceſſity. It was not, as he was an *apoſtle*, and that he might be fitter for the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghoſt; but it was to ſecure his ſalvation, leſt when he had preached to others, he ſhould be a *caſt-away*.

Let it be conſidered that this apoſtle, who lived *in infirmities, in reproaches, in neceſſities, in perſecutions, in diſtreſſes for Chriſt's ſake, who was alſo full of ſigns, and*

(*a*) 1 Cor. ix.

and wonders, and mighty deeds, and who had been caught up into the third heavens; yet reckons all his virtues as unsecure, and his salvation in danger, without this severity of self-denial; he thought all his other advancements in piety, without this, to be as vain a labour, as *beating the air*. (*b*)

So *run I*, saith he, *not as uncertainly*; by which he plainly teacheth us, that he, who does not thus run, who does not thus mortify the body, runs uncertainly, and fighteth to as little purpose as he that beateth the air.

Can they therefore, who live in ease, and softness, and bodily indulgences, who study and seek after every gratification, be said to be of St. *Paul*'s religion, or to be governed by that spirit which governed him?

An apostle preaching the gospel with signs and wonders in the midst of distress and persecution, thought his own salvation in danger, without this subjection of his own body; and shall we, who are born in the dregs of time, who have no works like his to appeal to, think it safe to feed and indulge in ease and plenty?

A man may indeed practise the outward part of a Christian, he may be orthodox in his faith, and regular in the forms of religion, and yet live in ease and indulgence. But if he would *put on Christ*, and be cloathed with the humility and meekness of his true disciples; if he would *love* his enemies, and be in Christ a *new creature*; if he would live by *faith*, and have his conversation in heaven; if he would be *born again* of God, and *overcome* the world, he must lay the foundation of all these graces in the mortification and subjection of his body. For not only religion, but reason can shew us, that almost every ill temper, every hindrance of virtue, every clog in our way of piety, and the strength of every temptation, chiefly arises from the *state* of our bodies.

CHAP.

(*a*) 2 Cor. xii.

CHAP. VIII.

THERE are no truths of Chriſtianity more plainly delivered in the ſcriptures, or more univerſally acknowledged by all Chriſtians than theſe two, *viz.* the *general corruption* of human nature, and the *abſolute neceſſity* of divine grace. Now theſe two doctrines make the reaſon and neceſſity of a continual ſelf-denial plain and obvious to the meaneſt capacity, and extend it to all thoſe things or enjoyments, which either ſtrengthen the corruption of our nature, or grieve the Holy Spirit of God, and cauſe him to leave us.

Let any one reflect upon the nature of theſe two fundamental truths, and he will find himſelf ſoon convinced, that all thoſe enjoyments are to be abſtained from, which either ſupport our natural blindneſs and corruption, or reſiſt and abate the inſpirations of the Holy Spirit.

He will find alſo, that this ſelf-denial muſt extend itſelf to every day of our lives, unleſs he can find a day when he is free from weakneſs, or out of the way of all temptations, a day which offers nothing ſuitable to the corruption of his nature, or nothing contrary to the good motions and directions of the Holy Ghoſt. Moſt people acknowledge this in general; they think it right to avoid things which ſtrengthen our corruption, and *grieve* the Spirit of God; but then not conceiving this with any ſufficient exactneſs, they think that an abſtinence from groſs ſin is a ſufficient ſecurity.

But let ſuch people conſider, that the corruption of our nature is like any other bodily illneſs, that never keeps at one ſtand, but is either increaſing or abating by every thing that we do.

A *dropſy* or a *gangrene* is not only increaſed by drunkenneſs or diſorderly indulgences, but receives conſtant ſtrength by all little indulgences that ſuit with it.

Now the corruption of our nature is an inbred diſtemper, that poſſeſſes us in the manner of a *dropſy* or *gangrene*; if we give into notorious ſins, we become ſlaves to this corruption, and are ſtraitway dead in ſin.

But

But tho' we keep clear of ſuch great offences; yet if we indulge, or allow ourſelves in ſuch practices as ſuit with the corruption of our nature, we as certainly nouriſh a ſlow death, and deſtroy ourſelves by degrees, as a man in a *dropſy* who abſtains from drunkenneſs, yet allows himſelf in ſuch ways as will not ſuffer his diſtemper to abate.

Now as little allowances that continually increaſe a diſtemper, will as certainly in time make it mortal, as if it had been urged on by violent methods; ſo little indulgences, which increaſe the corruption of our nature, as certainly tend to a ſpiritual death, as other more irregular methods.

It is therefore abſolutely certain, that our *ſelf-denial* is to be as *univerſal*, as the means of our corruption; that it is to laſt as long as our diſorder, and is to extend itſelf to every thing and every way of life that naturally increaſes it; and this, for as neceſſary a reaſon, as a man in a *dropſy* is not only to abſtain from drunkenneſs, but from every indulgence that increaſes his diſtemper.

A ſtate of *regimen* therefore, that is, a ſtate of holy diſcipline, is as neceſſary to alter the diſorder of our nature, as it is neceſſary to remove any diſtempered habit of body.

Let it be conſidered, that the corruption of our nature is but very weakly repreſented, by comparing it to theſe diſtempers; that they rather expreſs the manner of its cure, and the neceſſity of labouring after it, than ſet forth the degree of the diſorder.

For a man in theſe diſtempers may have only ſome part affected with them; but the corruption of our natures is as extenſive as our natures: it is the corruption of every faculty and every power; it is blindneſs in our underſtandings; it is vanity in our wills, intemperance in our appetites; it is ſelf-love, anger, luſt, pride and revenge, in our paſſions; it is falſeneſs, hypocriſy, hatred and malice, in our hearts. Now all this, and more than this, makes the miſerable corruption of human nature.

So that it is as neceſſary that our lives be a ſtate of

regimen,

egimen, that we live by ſuch rules as are contrary to this variety of diſorders, as it is neceſſary for a man under a complication of habitual diſtempers to enter into a *courſe* of regularity.

I ſuppoſe it will be readily granted, that all tempers are increaſed by indulgence, and that the more we yield to any diſpoſition, the ſtronger it grows; it is therefore certain, that *ſelf-denial* is our only cure, and that we muſt practiſe as many ſorts of ſelf-denial, as we have ill tempers to contend with.

Pride, hypocriſy, vanity, hatred and detraction, are all diſorderly indulgences, and have their only cure in ſelf-denial, as certainly as drunkenneſs and ſenſuality.

To deny one's ſelf all indulgences of pride and vanity, all inſtances of falſeneſs and hypocriſy, of envy and ſpight, requires greater care and watchfulneſs, and a more continual ſelf-denial than to avoid the motives to intemperance.

And he that thinks to render himſelf humble any other way, than by *denying* himſelf all inſtances of pride, is as abſurd as he who intends to be ſober without abſtaining from all degrees of intemperance. For *humility* as truly conſiſts in the practice of things that are *humble*, as *juſtice* conſiſts in the doing things that are *juſt*.

Every virtue is but a *mere name*, an empty ſound, till it ſhews itſelf by an abſtinence from all indulgences of the contrary vice, till it is founded in this ſelf-denial.

Now this is readily granted to be true in all ſenſual vices, that they are only to be cured by a perpetual ſelf-denial.

But the practice of the ſame ſelf-denial is as abſolutely required to deſtroy every ill temper of the mind, as any ſort of ſenſuality.

Self-love, pride, vanity, revenge, hypocriſy and malice, are acknowledged to be very groſs ſins, and indeed they are of the very nature of the devil, and as certainly deſtroy the ſoul, as murder and adultery.

But the misfortune is, that we govern ourſelves in theſe

theſe tempers, not by what is *ſinful* according to the principles of religion, but by what is *odious* in the eyes of the world. We don't labour to avoid the *ſin*, but are content to avoid what is *ſcandalous* in it.

Thus for inſtance, people would not be thought proud; but then they are afraid of no degrees of it, but ſuch as the world condemns: they don't form their lives by the ſcripture-rules of humility, but only endeavour to be decent and faſhionable in their pride.

Others would be very ſorry to be remarked for an envious and malicious ſpirit, who, at the ſame time, make the faults of their acquaintance the pleaſure of their lives, and turn all their converſation into evil-ſpeaking and detraction.

Now all this proceeds from hence, that they govern themſelves by the ſpirit of the world: the world allows of evil-ſpeaking and detraction, and therefore they practiſe it openly, tho' it is as contrary to religion, as murder and injuſtice.

And thus it will be with all theſe wicked tempers, till we practiſe an univerſal ſelf-denial, and labour after a religious perfection in all our ways of life.

We are certainly under habits of pride, till we are governed by humility; and we are not governed by humility, till we deny ourſelves, and are afraid of every appearance of pride, till we are willing to comply with every thing and every ſtate, that may preſerve and ſecure our humility.

No man is governed by a religious juſtice, till he is exact in all degrees of it; till he denies himſelf all approaches towards injuſtice; till he fears and abhors every appearance of fraud and crafty management.

Now it is this temper and ſtate of mind, that is the meaſure of every virtue.

A common *lyar* may hate ſome ſort of lyes; an *unjuſt* man may avoid ſome ſorts of injuſtice; ſo a *proud* perſon may diſlike ſome inſtances of pride; but then he has no more title to humility, than an unjuſt man has a title to integrity, becauſe there are ſome ſorts of injuſtice that he avoids.

So that it is not any ſingle acts, or any particular reſtraints;

reſtraints; but it is an uniform ſtate and temper of the mind, that ſtands conſtantly diſpoſed to every degree of humility, and averſe from every degree of pride, that is to denominate a perſon to be truly humble.

To meaſure any virtuous temper by any other ſtandard than this, is not to meaſure ourſelves by religion. How can any one be ſaid to be religiouſly *chaſte*, unleſs he abhors and avoids *all* inſtances of lewdneſs and impurity? how could he be ſaid to be *ſincerely* pious, unleſs he was fearful of *every occaſion* of ſin?

Muſt it not therefore be the ſame in humility and every other virtue? can any one be reckoned *truly* humble, till he denies himſelf *all* inſtances of pride?

Self-denial therefore is ſo univerſally neceſſary, that it is the foundation of every virtue; humility and charity requiring more ſelf-contradiction and ſelf-denial, than the ſtricteſt temperance.

From theſe obſervations we may be able to paſs a true judgment upon ourſelves as to our ſtate of virtue. If we are denying ourſelves, we are ſo far labouring after virtue; but if *ſelf-love*, if *idleneſs* and *indulgence*, be the ſtate of our lives, we may be ſure that we are as diſtant from true religion, as the *ſot* is diſtant from ſtrict temperance.

A life of idleneſs, indulgence, and ſelf-love, is an entire reſignation of ourſelves to every vice, except ſuch as cannot be committed without trouble; and we may aſſure ourſelves, that if we are in this ſtate, we are not only ſtrangers to virtue, but ready for every ſin that ſuits with eaſe and ſoftneſs.

Perſons of this turn of mind loſe the very *form* of piety, and find it too great a contradiction to their idleneſs, to comply with the very outward appearance of religion. They would be oftner at *church*, but it may be, their *ſeat* is crowded, and they can ſit with more eaſe by their fire-ſide at home. They would be more exact in kneeling when they are there, if they had always the ſame eaſe in kneeling.

I mention theſe particulars, as only ſmall inſtances of that general deadneſs and indiſpoſition towards all parts of religion, which this ſpirit of idleneſs and indulgence

dulgence creates. For it affects people in the ſame manner as to every other part of their duty, and makes them incapable of attending to it. For a perſon, that is too idle and ſelf-indulgent to undergo the *conſtant trouble* of publick worſhip, muſt be at a great diſtance from thoſe virtues, which are to be acquired by *care* and *watchfulneſs*, which are to *crucify* us to the world, and make us alive unto God.

Ambition and worldly *cares* diſtract the mind, and fill it with falſe concerns; but even theſe tempers are in a nearer ſtate to religion, and leſs indiſpoſe the ſoul to it, than idleneſs and indulgence. For ambition and worldly cares, tho' they employ the mind wrong, yet as they employ it, they preſerve ſome degree of activity in it, which by ſome means or other may happen to take a right turn; but *idleneſs* and *indulgence* is the death and burial of the ſoul.

I have been more particular upon this temper, becauſe it is ſo common, and even acknowledged without ſhame. People, who would not be thought *reprobate*, are yet not afraid to let you know that they hardly do any thing but *eat*, and *drink*, and *ſleep*, and take ſuch *diverſions* as ſuit with their eaſe; whereas if ſuch a ſtate of life be examined by the rules of reaſon and religion, it will appear as dangerous and frightful, as any other reprobate ſtate of ſin. For it is a ſtate that nouriſhes all the corruption of our nature; that expoſes us to all the vanity of the world, and reſigns us up to all the power of the devil.

Did we deſign to ſet ourſelves in the faireſt poſture for the devil to hit us, we ought to chuſe that of idleneſs and indulgence.

Watch and pray, ſaith our Saviour, *that ye fall not into temptation.* The devil's advice is, Be idle and indulge, and then ye will yield to every temptation. For if watching and prayer have any tendency to prevent our falling into temptation, it is certain that idleneſs and indulgence muſt, in an equal degree, make us incapable of reſiſting them.

To return: As certain therefore as our nature is in a ſtate of corruption; as certain as this corruption con-

ſiſts

ſts in ill tempers and inclinations; ſo certain is it, that if we would not die in our ſins, we muſt enter upon ſuch a courſe of life as is a *ſtate of denial*, not only to this or that, but to all thoſe corrupt tempers and inclinations.

For ſince man is only a compound of corrupt and diſorderly tempers, it is as neceſſary to deny himſelf, as to reſiſt evil; and he is indeed only ſo far virtuous, as he has put off himſelf, and is guided and governed by another ſpirit.

When we ſpeak of ſelf-denial, we are apt to confine it to eating and drinking; but we ought to conſider, that tho' a ſtrict temperance be neceſſary in theſe things, yet theſe are the eaſieſt and ſmalleſt inſtances of ſelf-denial. Pride, vanity, ſelf-love, covetouſneſs, envy, and other inclinations of the like nature, call for a more conſtant and watchful ſelf-denial, than the appetites of hunger and thirſt.

Till therefore we make our ſelf-denial as univerſal as our corruption; till we deny ourſelves all degrees of vanity and folly, as earneſtly as we deny ourſelves all degrees of drunkenneſs; till we reject all ſorts of pride and envy, as we abhor all kinds of gluttony; till we are as exact in all degrees of humility, as we are exact in all rules of temperance; till we watch and deny all irregular tempers, as we avoid all ſorts of ſenſuality, we can no more be ſaid to practiſe ſelf-denial, than he can be ſaid to be juſt, who only denies himſelf the liberty of ſtealing.

And till we do enter into this courſe of univerſal ſelf-denial, we ſhall make no progreſs in true piety, but our lives will be a *ridiculous mixture* of I know not what; *ſober* and covetous, proud and *devout*, *temperate* and vain, *regular* in our forms of devotion, and irregular in all our paſſions, circumſpect in *little modes* of behaviour, and careleſs and negligent of *tempers*, the moſt eſſential to piety.

And thus it will neceſſarily be with us, till we lay the axe to the root of the tree; till we deny and renounce the whole corruption of our nature, and reſign ourſelves up entirely to the ſpirit of God, to think,

and

and ſpeak, and act, by the wiſdom and purity of religion.

Let it be ſuppoſed, that religion requires us to forget a *language* that we loved and had been bred in, and conſtantly to ſpeak in a language that was *new* and *difficult*;

Could we poſſibly forget our former language that we lov'd, and was natural to us, any other way, than by denying ourſelves the liberty of ever ſpeaking it?

Could we forget it by only forbearing to uſe it on ſome particular occaſions? Would it not be as neceſſary to abſtain from thinking, reading, and writing in it, as to abſtain from uſing it in converſation? Could we render our new language any other way habitual or natural to us, than by making it the language of *all* ſeaſons.

Now this may teach us the abſolute neceſſity of a univerſal ſelf-denial; for tho' religion does not command us to part with an old *language* that we love, yet it commands us to part with an *old nature*, and to live and act by a new heart and a new ſpirit.

Now can we think to part with an *old nature*, by fewer rules of abſtinence, than are neceſſary to get rid of an old language? Muſt we not deny ourſelves the liberty of ever acting according to it? Can we get rid of it, by only denying it in particular inſtances? Must it not be as neceſſary to abſtain from all its ways of thinking and wiſhing, liking and diſliking, as to practiſe any abſtinence at all? For if the whole is to be changed, if a *new heart* is to be obtained, we are doing nothing, whilſt we only renounce it in part; and can no more be ſaid to live by a new heart, than they can be ſaid to ſpeak only a new language, whoſe general converſation is in their old natural tongue.

Indeed, a little attention to the nature of man, and the nature of Chriſtianity, will ſoon convince us, that *ſelf-denial* is the very ſubſtance, the beginning and ending of all our virtues. For,

Firſt, Chriſtianity is the *cure* of the corruption of our natural ſtate. Now what is the corruption of our natural ſtate? Why it conſiſts chiefly in *tempers and paſſions*

paſſions, and inclinations that fix us to bodily and earthly enjoyments, as to our proper good.

Now how is it that Chriſtianity cureth this corruption of our nature? Why it cureth this corruption of our nature, by teaching us to live and act by *principles of reaſon and religion.*

What are theſe principles of reaſon and religion?

They are ſuch as theſe:

Firſt, That God is our *only good*; that we cannot poſſibly be happy, but in ſuch enjoyment of him, as he is pleaſed to communicate to us.

Secondly, That our ſouls are immortal ſpirits, that are here only in a *ſtate of trial and probation.*

Thirdly, That we muſt all appear before the judgment-ſeat of God, to receive the ſentence of eternal life, or eternal death.

Theſe are the chief principles of *reaſon and religion*, by which every Chriſtian is to live; judging and thinking, chuſing and avoiding, hoping and fearing, loving and hating, according to theſe *principles*, as becomes a creature, that is ſent hither to prepare himſelf to live with God in everlaſting happineſs.

Now who does not ſee, that this reſolves all our religion into a ſtate of *ſelf-denial*, or contradiction to our natural ſtate?

For, firſt, what can be a greater ſelf-denial, or more contradictory to all our habitual notions and natural ſentiments, than to live and govern ourſelves by happineſs that is to be had in *God alone?* A happineſs, which our ſenſes, our old guides, neither ſee, nor feel, nor taſte, nor perceive: A happineſs, which gives us neither *figure* nor *dignity*, nor *equipage*, nor *power*, nor *glory* amongſt one another.

Look at man in his natural ſtate, acting by the judgment of his ſenſes, following the motions of his nature, and you will ſee him acting as if the world was full of infinite ſorts of happineſs.

He has not only a thouſand imaginary pleaſures, but has found out as many vexations; all which ſhew, that he thinks *happineſs* is every-where to be found; for no

one

one is vexed at any thing, but where he thinks he
diſappointed of ſome poſſible happineſs.

The happineſs therefore of religion, which is
happineſs in *God alone*, is a great *contradiction* to
our natural and habitual tempers and opinions; n
only as it propoſes a good, which our ſenſes cann
reliſh, but as it leads us from all theſe imaginary e
joyments, upon which our ſenſes have fixed our hear

To think of religion in any other ſenſe, than a
ſtate of *ſelf-denial*, is knowing nothing at all of i
For its whole nature is to direct us by a light, a
knowledge, and wiſdom from God, which is all co
trary to the darkneſs, ignorance, and folly of our n
tures.

It is therefore altogether impoſſible for any man
enter into the ſpirit of religion, but by *denying him*
by renouncing all his *natural tempers* and judgme
which have been formed by the blind motions of fl
and blood, and ſtrengthened by the example and
thority of the world. He cannot walk in the l
of God, but by rejecting the *dreams* of his ſenſes,
viſions of his own thoughts, and the *darkneſs* of wor
wiſdom.

We may let our ſenſes tell us, what we are to
and *drink*, or when we are to *ſleep*; we may let th
teach us, how near we may draw to a *fire*, how gr
a *burden* we may carry, or into how deep a water
may go; in theſe things they are our proper guides.

But, if we appeal to them to know the *true good*
man, or the proper happineſs of our *rational* natu
if we aſk *them* what *guilt* there is in ſin, or what *e*
dence there is in piety; if we conſult them as our gui
and inſtructors in theſe matters, we act as abſur
as if we were to try to *hear* with our *eyes*, or to *ſee* w
our *ears*.

For our ſenſes are no more fitted to tell us our
good, as we are Chriſtians and rational creatures, t
our *eyes* are fitted to inſtruct us in *ſounds*, or our *ear*
ſights.

Religion therefore has juſt ſo much power over
as it has power over our *natural tempers*, and the ju
m

ents of our ſenſes; ſo far as it has made us *deny* our-
lves, and reject the opinions and judgments of fleſh
nd blood, ſo far as it has ſettled its power within us.

Hence appears the abſolute neceſſity of our Saviour's
ropoſal to mankind, *If any man will come after me, let
m deny himſelf and follow me.*

For it plainly appears from the nature of the thing,
at no man can follow Chriſt, or walk in the light
at he walked, but by *denying himſelf*, and walking
ntrary to the darkneſs and errors of his own heart
d mind.

All our ways of thinking and judging of the nature
d value of things, are corrupted with the groſsneſs
d errors of our ſenſes.

We judge of every thing in the ſame manner, that
child judges of his *play-things*; that is, it is by our
ſes alone that we paſs the judgment, tho' we think
t we act with the *reaſon of man.*

The world is made up of *fine ſights*, equipage, ſports,
w and pageantry, which pleaſe and captivate the
nds of men, becauſe men have yet the minds of
ldren, and are juſt the ſame ſlaves to their ſenſes that
ldren are.

As children and men ſee the *ſame colours* in things;
children and men feel the *ſame ſenſible* pleaſures,
are affected with external objects in the ſame
nner.

But the misfortune is, that we laugh at the *little*
aſures, *poor* deſigns, and *trifling* ſatisfactions of
ldren; whilſt, at the ſame time, the *wiſdom*, the
ition, and *greatneſs* of men, is viſibly taken up with
ſame trifles.

A *coach and ſix*, and an *embroidered ſuit*, ſhall make a
at *ſtateſman* as happy, as ever a *go-cart* and *feather*
de his child.

When a man thinks how happy he ſhall be with a
at eſtate, he has all the ſame thoughts come into his
d that a child has, when he thinks what he would
with a great ſum of money; he would buy twenty
e horſes, he would have twenty *fine coats*, and ſee all
ſights, and the like.

Promiſe

Promiſe a man a great eſtate, and you will raiſe a
theſe ſame thoughts and deſigns in his mind.

Now whence can all this proceed, but from thi
that men act with the *ſame vanity* of mind; are unde
the *ſame poor* guidance of their ſenſes; are as ignoran
of their *true happineſs*; as great ſtrangers to their o
nature; and as far from a true ſenſe of their *relation* t
God, as when they firſt ſet out in life.

And is not this a plain argument of the reaſonable
neſs and neceſſity of *ſelf-denial*? For to indulge o
ſelves and live according to our *natural tempers* a
judgments, is to grow old in the follies of childhoo
And to deny ourſelves, is to ſave ourſelves, as it
denying ſuch tempers and judgments as are contrary
our eternal happineſs.

Let us take another view of the weakneſs and d
order of our nature, that we may ſtill ſee a greater
ceſſity of not walking according to it.

When we ſee people *drunk*, or in a violent paſſio
we readily own, that they are, ſo long as that co
nues, in a ſtate of *deluſion*, thinking, ſaying, and d
ing irregular things by the mere *force* of their blood a
ſpirits. In theſe ſtates we all ſee and acknowle
the power of our *bodies* over our reaſon, and ne
ſuppoſe a man capable of judging or acting wiſely,
long as he is under the violence of *paſſion*, or hea
with *drink*.

Now this is more or leſs the conſtant ſtate of all m
kind, who are, by bodily impreſſions, and the ag
tions of the blood and ſpirits, in the ſame kind of d
ſion, as men that are *drunk* or in a *paſſion*, tho' not
ways in the ſame degree.

A man that is drunk has heated his blood to that
gree, that it ſends up ſpirits to the brain in too viol
a motion, and in too great a quantity. This viol
motion of the ſpirits raiſes ſo many ideas in the bra
and in ſo diſorderly a manner, that the man is ev
minute different from himſelf, as faſt as different
new ideas are raiſed in his head by the impetuous co
of the ſpirits. This is the diſorder of a man tha
drunk.

N

Now this is the ſtate of all people more or leſs, when they appear to one another as ſober.

For, firſt, drunkenneſs is a ſtate of diſorder and confuſion, becauſe our heads are then filled with a crowd of ideas, which we have little or no power over, and which for that reaſon diſtract our judgment.

Now this is in a certain degree the ſtate of all men whilſt they are in the body: the conſtitution of our bodies, and our commerce with the world, is conſtantly filling our heads with ideas and thoughts that we have little or no power over, but *intrude* upon our minds, *alter* our opinions, and *affect* our judgments in the ſame manner, as they diſorder the minds of thoſe that are drunk.

Let any one try to *meditate* upon any the moſt important doctrine of religion, and he will find the truth of this obſervation; he will find a thouſand ideas crowd upon him, in ſpight of all his care to avoid them, which will hinder his meditation, and prevent his ſeeing things in that light in which he would ſee them if his mind was empty of other thoughts.

Now it is the ſame cauſe that hinders him from thinking *ſo well* as he would, that hinders the drunken man from thinking *at all*; that is, an *involuntary ſucceſſion of ideas.*

So that every man, ſo long as he is in the body, is in ſome degree weak and diſordered in his judgment, in the ſame manner, and for the ſame cauſes, as people that are drunk.

Secondly, another circumſtance of *drunkenneſs* is this, that ideas and thoughts are raiſed in a diſorderly manner, becauſe the *blood* is too much heated.

Now this is another conſtant circumſtance that attends men in every ſtate of life.

For, firſt, it is the ſame thing whether our ſpirits be heated with liquor, or any thing elſe; if they are heated all the ſame effects are produced.

This is undeniably true, becauſe we daily ſee that paſſion will heat and diſorder people in the ſame manner as *they* are who are inflamed with liquor.

Therefore our own *thoughts* and *imaginations* have

the ſame effect upon our ſpirits as *drink*; ſo that it i
the ſame thing whether a man be drunk with paſſion
or any other violent ſet of thoughts, or heated wit
liquor. There is the ſame weakneſs of mind, the ſam
diſordered imagination, and the ſame wrong appre
henſion of the nature of things.

Now tho' all people are not at all times drunk wit
paſſion, or ſome *violent* imagination, yet they are a
ways in a diſorder of the ſame kind; they have ſom
thing that affects and hurries their ſpirits in the ſam
manner, that a man's ſpirits are affected in ſome violen
paſſions.

And the reaſon is, becauſe men are always in ſom
paſſion or other, tho' not to that degree as to be viſibl
and give offence to other people.

We are always in a ſtate either of *ſelf-love*, vanit
pride, hatred, ſpite, envy, covetouſneſs or ambition
ſome one or other of theſe paſſions is in ſome degr
affecting our ſpirits in the ſame manner that any v
lent paſſion, or heat of liquor affects our ſpirits, diffe
ing only in the degree.

A ſilent *envy*, a ſecret *vanity*, which no body ſe
raiſes thoughts in our heads, and diſorders our juſ
ments in the ſame manner as more violent paſſions.

You may increaſe the *vanity* and *envy*, till it end
diſtraction and madneſs, as it ſometimes happens; b
then we may be ſure, that it diſordered our und
ſtanding in the ſame manner, and made us fooliſh a
extravagant in ſome degree, long before it came
madneſs. Whilſt therefore we are in the body,
are conſtantly in a ſtate of diſorder, like to thoſe w
are drunk, or in a violent paſſion; we have ſome p
ſion or other, either of ſelf-love, vanity, envy, or
like, that affects our ſpirits, and diſorders our ju
ment in the ſame manner, tho' not in the ſame degr
as their ſpirits are affected who are in the heat of dr
or in ſome violent paſſion.

Thirdly, another circumſtance of drunkenneſs
this, that it forms us to a taſte and temper peculia
it, ſo as to leave a dulneſs and indiſpoſition in the m
towards any thing elſe. An habitual drunkard has
pleaſ

leaſure, like that confuſed hurry and heat of thoughts hat ariſes from inflamed blood. The repeating of this leaſure ſo often, has given him a turn of mind that eliſhes nothing but what relates to intemperance.

Now this is the ſtate of all people in ſome reſpect or ther, there is ſome way of life that has got hold of hem, and given them a taſte and reliſh for it, in the me manner that drinking has formed the drunkard to peculiar liking of it. All people are not intemperate, t all are under habits of life that affect the mind in e ſame manner as intemperance.

Some people have indulged themſelves ſo long in *eſſing*; others in *play*; others in *ſports* of the field; hers only in little *goſſiping ſtories*; that they are as uch ſlaves to theſe ways of life, as the intemperate an is a ſlave to liquor.

Now we readily own that a man, who has enſlaved mſelf to the pleaſures of drinking and intemperance, s thereby render'd himſelf incapable of being a *reaſonle judge* of other happineſs and pleaſure; but then we not enough conſider, that we are hurt in the ſame nner by any other way of life that has taken hold us, and given us a temper and turn of mind peculiar it.

It is to as little purpoſe to talk of religion, or the ppineſs of piety, to a perſon that is fond of *dreſs*, or , or *ſports*, as to another that is intemperate; for pleaſures of theſe particular ways of life make as deaf to all other propoſals of happineſs, and as apable of judging of other happineſs and pleaſure, e who is enſlaved to intemperance.

A lady abominates a *ſot*, as a creature that has only ſhape of a man; but ſhe does not conſider, that, nken as he is, perhaps he can be more content with want of *liquor*, than ſhe can with the want of *fine bs:* And if this be her caſe, ſhe only differs from , as one intemperate man differs from another.

Thus it appears, that whether we conſider the na-, circumſtances, and effects of drunkenneſs, that mankind are more or leſs in the *ſame ſtate* of weak- and diſorder.

I have dwelt the longer upon this compariſon, becauſe it ſeems ſo eaſily to explain the diſorder of our nature. For as every one readily ſees how the bodily diſorders of drunkenneſs, and violent paſſion, blind and pervert our minds; ſo it ſeems an eaſy ſtep from thence, to imagine how the body, tho' in a *cooler ſtate*, does yet diſorder the mind in the ſame manner, tho' not in the ſame degree. It is alſo eaſy to conceive, that if *violent paſſion*, or a heated imagination, confounds our judgments, and gives us wrong apprehenſions of things, that therefore *all paſſions*, tho' more *ſtill* and *ſecret*, muſt yet influence our minds, and make us weak and diſordered in our judgments, in the ſame manner, tho' not in the ſame degree, as thoſe are who are in a violent paſſion. So that the meaneſt capacity, may by this apprehend, that ſo long as we are in the body, we are in a ſtate of weakneſs and diſorder, that is, full of ſuch blindneſs and deluſion, as attends a ſtate of drunkenneſs and paſſion.

It is intended, by this account of human nature, to convince us of the *abſolute neceſſity* of renouncing ourſelves, of denying our tempers and inclinations, and reſigning ourſelves wholly to the light and wiſdom of God. For ſince by our ſtate of corruption and ſlavery to the body, we are always under the power of its *blind motions*; ſince all our inclinations and judgments are only the judgments of heated blood, drunken ſpirits and diſordered paſſions, we are under as abſolute a neceſſity of denying our natural tempers and judgments as of refraining from intemperance.

For muſt a man, that is in a fit of *violent* paſſion, ſilence that paſſion before he can judge of the ordinary things of life? Is it a ſtate of ſuch blindneſs as makes him blind in the plaineſt matters, and unable to judge rightly even of things which he is acquainted with? And can we think, that our more *ſtill* and *ſecret* paſſions of ſelf-love, pride, vanity, envy, and the like, make us leſs blind as to the things of God, than a heated paſſion does as to the things of this world?

Will an inflamed paſſion diſorder a man too much to judge of any thing, even of his own buſineſs? And

will not a paſſion of *leſs violence* diſorder a man's judgment in things of a ſpiritual nature, which he never was rightly acquainted with, which he never ſaw or underſtood in the manner that he ought, and which are all contrary to the impreſſions of his ſenſes?

Every one ſees people in the world, whom he takes to be incapable of *ſober* judgments, and *wiſe* reflections, for this reaſon, becauſe he ſees that they are full of themſelves, blinded with prejudices, violent in their paſſions, wild and extravagant in their imaginations.

Now as often as we ſee theſe people, we ſhould reflect that we ſee *ourſelves*; for we as certainly ſee a *true repreſentation* of ourſelves, when we look at ſuch people, as we ſee a true picture of our ſtate, when ſee a man in the ſorrows and agonies of death.

You are not *dying* as this man is; you are not in his ſtate of ſickneſs and extremity; but ſtill, his ſtate ſhews you your own *true picture*; it ſhews you, that your life is in the *midſt of death*; that you have in you the ſeeds of ſickneſs and mortality; that you are dying, tho' not in his *degree*; and that you are only at a little *uncertain diſtance* from thoſe, who are lying upon their laſt beds.

When therefore you ſee men living in the diſorders of their paſſions, blinded with prejudices, ſwelling in pride, full of themſelves, vain in their imaginations, and perverſe in their tempers, you muſt believe, that you ſee as true a repreſentation of your own ſtate, as if you ſaw a man in his laſt ſickneſs.

You, it may be, are not in the extravagance of his diſordered tempers, you are at ſome *uncertain diſtance* from his ſtate; but if you fancy that you are not corrupted with *ſelf-love*, not weakened by prejudices, not blinded with pride, not vain in your imaginations, not ridiculous in your tempers, becauſe you are not in ſuch diſorders as you find ſome people, you think as abſurdly, as if you was to imagine yourſelf to be *immortal*, becauſe you are not in that *extremity* of death, in which you ſee ſome people.

And as the true way of knowing, and being rightly affected with the weakneſs and mortality of our ſtate,

is frequently to view the condition of *dying men*, as pictures of ourſelves; ſo the moſt likely means to affect us with a juſt ſenſe of the corruption and diſorder of our hearts, is to conſider the frailties, corruptions, and diſorders of other people, as certain repreſentations of the frailty and corruption of our own ſtate.

When therefore you ſee the violence of other mens paſſions, the irregularity of their tempers, the ſtrength of their prejudices, the folly of their inclinations, and the vanity of their minds, remember that you ſee ſo many plain reaſons for *denying* yourſelf, and reſiſting your own nature, which has in it the ſeeds of all thoſe evil tempers, which you ſee in the moſt irregular people.

From the foregoing reflections upon human nature, we may learn thus much, that abſtinence, as to eating and drinking, is but a ſmall part of Chriſtian *ſelf-denial*.

The corruption of our nature has its chief ſeat in the irregularity of our tempers, the violence of our paſſions, the blindneſs of our judgments, and the vanity of our minds; it is as dangerous therefore to indulge theſe tempers, as to live in gluttony and intemperance.

You think it ſhameful to be an *epicure*; you would not be ſuſpected to be fond of *liquor*; you think theſe tempers would too much ſpoil all your pretences to religion: You are very right in your judgment; but then proceed a ſtep farther, and think it as ſhameful to be fond of *dreſs*, or delighted with *yourſelf*, as to be fond of *dainties*; and that it is as great a ſin to pleaſe any corrupt *temper* of your heart, as to please your *palate*: remember, that blood heated with *paſſion* is like blood heated with *liquor*, and that the groſſneſs of gluttony is no greater a contrariety to religion than the politeneſs of pride, and the vanity of our minds.

I have been the longer upon this ſubject, trying every way to repreſent the weakneſs and corruption of our nature; becauſe ſo far as we rightly underſtand it, ſo far we ſee into the reaſonableneſs and neceſſity of all religious duties. If we fancy ourſelves to be wiſe and regular in our tempers and judgments, we can ſee no reaſon

reaſon for denying ourſelves; but if we find that our whole nature is in diſorder, that our light is darkneſs, our wiſdom fooliſhneſs, that our tempers and judgments are as groſs and blind as our appetites, that our ſenſes govern us as they govern children, that our ambition and greatneſs is taken up with *gewgaws* and *trifles*, that the ſtate of our bodies is a ſtate of error and deluſion, like that of drunkenneſs and paſſion.

If we ſee ourſelves in this true light, we ſhall ſee the whole reaſon of Chriſtian *ſelf-denial*, of meekneſs and poverty of ſpirit, of putting off our old man, of renouncing our whole ſelves, that we may obtain all things from God; of watching and prayer, and mortifying all our inclinations, that our hearts may be moved by a motion from God, and our wills and inclinations be directed by the light and wiſdom of religion.

Religion has little or no hold of us, till we have theſe right apprehenſions of ourſelves; it may ſerve for a little decency of outward behaviour, but it is not the religion of our hearts, till we feel the weakneſs and diſorder of our nature, and embrace piety and devotion, as the means of recovering us to a ſtate of perfection and happineſs in God.

A man that thinks himſelf in *health*, cannot lament the ſickneſs of his ſtate.

If we are pleaſed with the pride and vanity of our minds, if we live in pleaſure and ſelf-ſatisfactions, we ſhall feel no meaning in our devotions, when we lament the miſery and corruption of our nature. We may have times and places to mourn for ſins; but we ſhall feel no more inward grief, than *hired mourners* do at a funeral.

So that as the corruption of our nature, is the foundation and reaſon of ſelf-denial; ſo a right ſenſe and feeling of that corruption, is neceſſary to make us rightly affected with the offices and devotions of religion.

I ſhall now ſhew, that the reaſonableneſs and neceſſity of ſelf-denial, is alſo founded upon another fundamental doctrine of religion, namely, the *neceſſity* of *divine grace*, which I ſhall leave to be the ſubject of the following chapter.

CHAP. IX.

I COME now to another article of our religion, namely the *abſolute neceſſity of divine grace*, which is another univerſal and conſtant reaſon of *ſelf-denial*.

The inviſible operation and aſſiſtance of God's Holy Spirit, by which we are diſpoſed towards that which is good, and made able to perform it, is a conſeſs'd doctrine of Chriſtianity.

Our natural life is preſerved by ſome union with God, who is the fountain of life to all the creation, to which union we are altogether ſtrangers; we find that we are alive, as we find that we think; but how, or by what influence from God our life is ſupported, is a ſecret into which we cannot enter. It is the ſame thing with relation to our ſpiritual life, or life of grace; it ariſes from ſome *inviſible union* with God, or divine influence, which in this ſtate of life we cannot comprehend. Our bleſſed Saviour ſaith, *The wind bloweth where it liſteth, and thou heareſt the ſound thereof, but cannot tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; ſo is every one that is born of God* (*a*). This ſhews us how ignorant we are of the manner of the operations of the Holy Spirit; we may feel its effects, as we may perceive the effects of the wind, but are as much ſtrangers to its manner of coming upon us, as we are ſtrangers to that exact point, from whence the wind begins to blow, and where it will ceaſe.

The Spirit of God is like the nature of God, too high for our conceptions, whilſt we are in theſe dark houſes of clay. But our bleſſed Saviour has in ſome degree helped our conceptions in this matter, by the manner of his giving the Holy Spirit to his diſciples; *and he breathed on them, and ſaid unto them, Receive the Holy Ghoſt.* Now by this ceremony of breathing, we are taught to conceive of the communications of the Holy Spirit with ſome likeneſs to breath or wind, that its influences come upon us in ſome manner moſt like to a gentle breathing of the air. Repreſentations of this kind are

(*a*) John iii. 8.

are only made in compliance with the weakneſs of our apprehenſions, which not being able to conceive things as they are in their own Nature, muſt be inſtructed, by comparing them to ſuch things as our ſenſes are acquainted with. Thus the *wiſdom* and *knowledge*, that is revealed from God, is compared *to light*; not becauſe light is a true repreſentation of the wiſdom of God; but becauſe it ſerves beſt to repreſent it to our low capacities. In like manner, the *influences* of the Holy Spirit, are ſet forth by the ceremony of *breathing* upon us; not becauſe *breath*, or *air*, or *wind*, are true repreſentations of the gifts of the Spirit; but becauſe they are the propereſt repreſentations that yet fall within our knowledge.

But that which is moſt neceſſary for us to know, and of which we are ſufficiently informed in ſcripture, is the *abſolute neceſſity* of this divine aſſiſtance.

We are uſed to conſider thoſe only as *inſpired* perſons, who are called by God to ſome extraordinary deſigns, and act by immediate revelation from him. Now as inſpiration implies an *immediate revelation* from God, in this ſenſe there has been but few inſpir'd perſons; but inſpiration, as it ſignifies an *inviſible operation*, or *aſſiſtance* and *inſtruction* of God's Holy Spirit, is the common gift and privilege of all Chriſtians; in this ſenſe of inſpiration, they are all *inſpir'd perſons*. *Know ye not*, ſaith St. *Paul*, *that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghoſt which is in you.* St. *John* likewiſe, *Hereby know we that he dwelleth in us by the Spirit, which he hath given us: for as many as are led by the Spirit of God, are the ſons of God.* Again, *Now if any man hath not the Spirit of Chriſt, he is none of his.* (*a*) From theſe, and many other paſſages of the like nature, it is undeniably plain, that the life which we now live, is a life in and by the Spirit of God, and that they are only ſons of God, who are led by this Spirit. Now this doctrine plainly proves the neceſſity of a conſtant ſelf-denial; for it muſt be neceſſary that we deny ourſelves all thoſe tempers and ways of life, which may make God *withhold* his grace from us; and likewiſe all thoſe enjoy-

(*a*) Rom. viii. 11.

ments and indulgences, which may make us *less able* and *less disposed* to improve and co-operate with those degrees of divine grace that are communicated to us.

Our blessed Saviour saith, *If any man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.* (a) This teaches us how we are to *invite* the good Spirit of God to dwell in us: we are to *prepare* ourselves for the abode of this divine guest, by loving Christ, and keeping his commandments: whence we also learn, that the Spirit of God does not *equally visit* all persons in all ways of life, but that we must *prepare* ourselves for his presence.

We are also told, that *God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.* This also explains to us the method of divine grace, that it is bestowed with regard to the *state* and *temper* of persons; that there are some dispositions which *separate* us from the Spirit of God, and others that procure to us a larger share of its gifts and graces. We are also here taught to consider *pride*, not only as a sin that has its particular guilt, but as it has this certain effect, that it *extinguishes* the divine light, *deprives* us of God's Spirit, and leaves us to sink under the corruption and weight of our nature.

We are to consider *humility* also, not only as it is a reasonable duty, and proper to our state; but as it *qualifies* and *prepares* us for larger degrees of divine grace, such as may purify and perfect our souls in all manner of holiness. All instances therefore of pride are to be avoided, all sorts of humility to be practised, not only for their own sakes, but as necessary *preparations* for divine grace, that we may be *fit temples* for the Holy Ghost to dwell in. Now seeing we are none of Christ's if the Spirit of Christ be not in us, seeing we are only so far Christians, as we are renew'd by the Holy Ghost; nothing can be more necessary to true piety than that we form every part of our lives with regard to this Holy Spirit. That we consider all our *tempers, pleasures, cares, designs* and *ways* of life, whether they be

(a) John xiv. 23.

be ſuch as *ſuit* with the wiſdom and heavenly guidance of the Holy Spirit. This doctrine ſhews us to ourſelves in a *new point* of view, and may ſerve to teach us ſeveral truths, which we ſhould otherwiſe not ſo readily apprehend.

When we are left to conſider our duty with relation to the expreſs commandments of God, there are many ways of life, which we think ourſelves at liberty to follow, becauſe they ſeem to be no plain breach of any commandment. But we are to look to a farther rule, and to conſider our pleaſures and cares, our deſigns and endeavours, not only whether they are contrary to the letter of the law, but whether they are according to the Spirit of God; for if they are contrary to the Spirit of God, if they ſuit not with his ſecret inſpirations, they are as truly to be avoided, as if they were contrary to ſome expreſs commandment. For we are aſſured from ſcripture, that they only are the ſons of God, *who are led by the Spirit of God*; and none can be ſaid to be led by the Spirit of God, but they whoſe lives are according to it, whoſe actions, cares and pleaſures, hopes and fears, are ſuch as may be ſaid to be guided by the motions of the Holy Ghoſt.

We are therefore to conſider ourſelves as *perſons*, that have no knowledge or wiſdom, but what comes from God, and that his wiſdom will no longer dwell with us, than ſo long as we act and conduct ourſelves conformably to it. So that we muſt not vainly deceive ourſelves in ſaying, where is the harm of ſuch *indulgences*, or ſuch *vanities* and idle *amuſements?* but muſt conſider, whether they are ſuch as are conformable to a Life that is to be directed by the Holy Ghoſt, whether they will *invite* his aſſiſtance, and make him *delight* to dwell with us. In this manner muſt we examine and try all our ways of life, as well our cares as our pleaſures, and all our tempers and inclinations. For unreaſonable cares, as well as unreaſonable pleaſures, are equally contrary to the wiſdom of the Holy Spirit, and equally ſeparate us from him. People often think their deſigns and diverſions innocent, becauſe they

they are not *ſinful* in their nature, but they ſhould alſo conſider whether they are not *vain* and *fooliſh*, and *unſuitable* to the ſtate and condition of a Chriſtian. For a life of *folly* and *vanity*, and *trifling deſigns*, is no more living by the *Spirit of God*, than a life of *groſs ſins* is keeping the *commandments*. So that the ſafeſt rule to judge of our actions by, is to conſider them with relation to that Spirit, by which we are to be guided. Is this deſign, or this diverſion, according to the wiſdom of the Spirit of God? Am I in theſe things improving the ſecret inſpiration of the Holy Ghoſt? am I here governed by a wiſdom from above? Are theſe ways ſuch as I can truly ſay, that I am led into them by the Spirit of God? Do I allow myſelf in them, becauſe they ſerve to ſet forth the glory of God, and are agreeable to the condition of a diſciple of Chriſt? Are they good proofs that the Spirit of God dwelleth in me, and that by thus ſowing to the Spirit, I ſhall of the Spirit reap everlaſting life? This is the rule of perfection, by which Chriſtians are to regulate their thoughts, words and actions; for we are called by God to a ſtate of purity and holineſs, to act by the motions of his Holy Spirit, and make no other uſe of ourſelves, or the world we are in, than ſuch as is conformable to that dignity of life and ſtate of glory to which we are called. The ſpirit of our religion is to be the ſpirit of our lives, the conſtant principle of all our tempers and inclinations, which is to render us reaſonable, and wiſe, and holy in all our progreſs thro' the world.

The *renewal* of our hearts by the Spirit of God conſiſts in *new thoughts* and *new deſires*, in filling our minds with great and ſublime truths, and in giving us deſires and inclinations, hopes and fears, cares and pleaſures ſuitable to them.

This is being born of the Spirit: Hence appears a plain reaſon of an *univerſal ſelf-denial*, becauſe the ſpirit of the world, and the ſpirit of our corrupt hearts, is in a ſtate of contrariety to this Spirit and Wiſdom which is from above. So that it is to be the main buſineſs and labour of our lives, to contradict thoſe motions

tions of our hearts, and thoſe tempers of the world, which are *contrary* to this Spirit, which is to be the principle of our new life in Chriſt.

We muſt therefore deny ourſelves all thoſe ways of life, all cares and enjoyments which too much poſſeſs our minds, and render them inſenſible of theſe great truths. We muſt practiſe all that *ſelf-denial*, *temperance*, *abſtinence*, *care* and *watchfulneſs*, which can any way *fit* and *prepare* our minds to hear and receive, to comprehend and reliſh the inſtructions and doctrine which come from the Spirit of God. For all theſe truths, every thing that relates to God and religion, have a different effect upon us, according to the ſtate or way of life that we are in: As *land* muſt be prepared to receive the beſt ſeed, as *rocks* can bring forth no fruit; ſo unleſs our minds are in ſome *proper ſtate* and diſpoſition to *co-operate* with the Holy Spirit, and receive his inſtructions, his gifts and graces will bring forth no fruit.

'Tis acknowledged by all, that a life of *intemperance* and *debauchery*, makes us dead and ſenſeleſs of religion, and incapable of receiving its truths: But then it is not enough conſidered, that the *vanity* of the mind, and the underſtanding buſied in *trifles*, and *impertinent courſe* of life, will as certainly produce the *ſame effect*. If our underſtanding is full of fooliſh imaginations, devoted to trifles, religion can gain no entrance. A man may be ſo earneſt in *picking ſtraws*, as to have no leiſure to think of his ſalvation; nor any more inclination to it, than one that is conſtantly in *drink*. *Children* are incapable of religion, not becauſe they are *intemperate* and *debauched*, but becauſe they have *little minds*, that are taken up and employed with *little* and *trifling* entertainments. Now if, when we are men, we have the minds of children, and have only chang'd our *play-things*, we ſhall embrace and practiſe religion juſt to as much purpoſe as children do: For a mind taken up with *gewgaws*, and *trifles*, and impertinent ſatisfactions, is in the ſame ſtate, whether it be *four*, or whether it be *fifty years* old. If it be made ſilly with *trifling* concerns, and *falſe* ſatisfactions,

tisfactions, it is in a ſtate of as much diſorder, and as contrary to religion, as a ſtate of *gluttony* and *intemperance*.

Thus poor *amuſements*, vain *arts*, uſeleſs *ſciences*, impertinent *learning*, falſe *ſatisfaction*, a wrong turn *of mind*, a ſtate of *idleneſs*, or any the vaineſt *trifles* of life, may keep men at as great a diſtance from the true impreſſions of religion, and from living by the Spirit of God, as the ignorance of childhood, or the *debaucheries* of intemperance.

Titius is temperate and regular; but then he is ſo great a *mathematician*, that he does not know when *ſunday* comes: He ſees people going to *church*, as he ſees others going to market; he goes on ſtudying, meaſuring, and calculating, and may as well be called a *merchant*, as a *Chriſtian*.

All doctrines of *religion* are diſagreeable to *Philo*, he avoids them as he avoids *party*; now what's the reaſon of it? It is not becauſe he is *debauched* and *intemperate*, but he is a *virtuoſo*, devoted to polite *literature*; his ſoul is extended to all the *curioſities* in the world, and thinks all time to be loſt, that is not ſpent in the ſearch of *ſhells*, *urns*, *inſcriptions*, and *broken pieces* of *pavements*. This makes the truths of *religion*, and the concerns of *eternity*, ſeem ſmall things in his eyes, fit only for the enquiry of *narrow*, *little*, and *unpolite* ſouls.

Patronus is fond of a clergyman that underſtands *muſick*, *painting*, *ſtatuary*, and *architecture*. He is an enemy to the *diſſenters*, and loves the *church of England*, becauſe of the *ſtatelineſs* and *beauty* of its buildings; he never comes to the *ſacrament*, but will go forty miles to ſee a *fine altar-piece*. He goes to church when there is a *new tune* to be heard, but never had any more ſerious thoughts about *ſalvation*, than about *flying*. If you viſit him when he is dying, you will hear his dying thoughts upon *architecture*.

Euſebius would read prayers *twice* every day in his *pariſh*; he would be often with the poor and ſick, and ſpend much time in charitable viſits; he would be wholly taken up in the *cure* of ſouls, but that he

is

is busy in studying the *old Grammarians*, and would fain *reconcile* some differences amongst them before he dies.

Lycia has no wicked or irreligious temper, and she might be pious, but that she is too *easy*, *gay* and *chearful*, to admit of care of any kind. She can no more *repent*, than she can be *out of temper*, and must be the same *sparkling chearful* creature in the *church*, as in the *play-house*. She might be capable of understanding the misery of human nature, and the necessity of the comforts of religion; but that she is so *happy* every time she is *dress'd*.

Matrona is old, and has been this *fifty years* eating and drinking, sleeping and waking, dressing and undressing, *paying* and *receiving visits*. She has no prophaneness; and if she has no piety, it is owing to this, that she never had a *spare half an hour* in all her life to think about it. She envies her daughters, because they will *dress* and *visit* when she is dead.

Publius goes to *church* sometimes, and reads the scripture; but he knows not what he reads or prays, his head is so full of *politicks*. He is so angry at *kings* and ministers of *state*, that he has no time nor disposition to call himself to account. He has the history of all *parliaments*, *elections*, *prosecutions* and *impeachments*, and dies with little or no religion through a constant fear of *popery*.

Siccus has neither *virtues* nor *vices*; he has been all his life-long *building* and *pulling down*, making *canals* and *ditches*, raising *walls* and *fences*. People call him a good man, because he employs the poor; *Siccus* might have been a *religious* man, but that he thought *building* was the chief happiness of a rational creature. He is all the week amongst *dirt* and *mortar*, and stays at home on *sundays* to view his contrivances. He will die more contentedly, if his death does not happen whilst some *wall* is in building.

Silvius laughs at *preaching* and *praying*, not because he has any prophane principle, or any arguments against religion; but because he happens to have been

been uſed to nothing but *noiſe*, and *hunting*, and *ſports*.

I have mentioned theſe ſeveral *characters*, to ſhew us, that it is not only *profanenneſs*, *debauchery*, and *open vices*, that keep men from the impreſſions of true religion; but that the mere *play-things* of life, impertinent *ſtudies*, vain *amuſements*, falſe *ſatisfactions*, idle *diſpoſitions*, will produce the ſame effect. A *wrong* turn of mind, *impertinent* cares, a ſucceſſion of the *pooreſt trifles*, if they take up our thoughts, leave no more room for the cares and fears of true piety, than groſs ſenſuality.

Our bleſſed Saviour ſaith, *Wo unto you Phariſees, for ye love the uppermoſt ſeats in ſynagogues, and greetings in the markets.* (*a*) The wiſdom of this world would find little to condemn in ſuch a behaviour as this; but yet we ſee that the wiſdom of God condemns it with a *woe*, teaching us, that every *wrong turn* of mind, every falſe ſatisfaction, puts the ſoul in a ſtate that is *contrary* to religion, and makes men *unfit* to receive its doctrines. This is the reaſon why religion calls us to a ſtate of *ſelf-denial*, *humility* and *mortification*, becauſe it is a ſtate that awakens the ſoul into right apprehenſions of things, and qualifies us to ſee, and hear, and underſtand the doctrines of eternal truth. We muſt deny ourſelves all our ways of folly and vanity, let go every falſe ſatisfaction, that the ſoul may be at liberty with its full attention, to liſten to the inſtructions of religion.

Would we ſee any thing exactly, we muſt take our eyes from every thing elſe; ſo, if we would apprehend truly the things of religion, we muſt take our minds from all other objects; we muſt empty ourſelves of all falſe ſatisfactions, or we ſhall never know the want, or feel the excellency of our true good.

We ſee even in the worldly matters, that if we propoſe any thing to a man when he is in the purſuit of ſomething elſe, he hardly hears or underſtands us; we muſt ſtay for a ſeaſon of more leiſure and indifference, till his thoughts and paſſions are at reſt.

Now

(*a*) Luke xi. 43.

Now this holds much ſtronger in matters of religion; its doctrines are neither heard nor underſtood, becauſe it always finds us in the purſuit of *ſomething elſe*; it matters not what this *ſomething elſe* is, whether it be *loving uppermoſt ſeats in the ſynagogues*, a fondneſs for *triſles*, a joy in *luxury* and *idleneſs*, or a labour after *riches*; the mind is equally employed wrong, and ſo not in a condition to like, or at leiſure to liſten to any other happineſs. If you were to propoſe the ſame truths to a man in another ſtate, when wearineſs or diſappointment has made him give up all deſigns, or when ſickneſs or the approach of death ſhews him that he muſt act no longer in them, they would have quite another effect upon him; then the great things of religion appear great indeed; he *feels* their whole weight, and is *amazed* that he did not ſee them always in the ſame manner. Now it is the great end and deſign of *ſelf-denial*, to put a ſtop to the follies of life, and mortify all our paſſions, that our ſouls may quietly conſider, and fully comprehend the truths which come from God; that our hearts being at liberty from a crowd of fooliſh thoughts, may be ready to obey and co-operate with the *inſpirations* of that Spirit, which is to lead and quicken us in all holineſs; that *death* and *judgment*, *heaven* and *hell*, may make as deep impreſſions upon our minds in the middle of our lives, as at our laſt hour; that we may be as wiſe and prudent as *ſick* and *dying* men, and live with ſuch apprehenſions as moſt people die with; that we may ſee the vanity of the world, the miſery of ſin, the greatneſs of eternity, and the want of God, as they ſee it, who ſtand upon the brink of another world.

This is the great and happy work of ſelf-denial, which is to fill us with a ſpirit of wiſdom, to awaken us into a true knowledge of ourſelves, and ſhew us who, and where, and what we are. Till this ſelf-denial has put a ſtop to our follies, and opened our eyes, our life is but a *ſleep*, a *dream*, a mere ſucceſſion of *ſhadows*; and we act with as little reaſon and judgment, as a child that is pleaſed with blowing about a *feather*. We muſt therefore not only deny our wicked and ſinful,

ſul inclinations, but alſo all our follies, impertinences, and vain ſatisfactions; for as plain and known ſins harden and corrupt, ſo impertinences and falſe ſatisfactions delude and blind our hearts, and render them inſenſible of our real miſery, or true happineſs.

We are true members of the kingdom of God; when the kingdom of God is within us; when the ſpirit of religion is the ſpirit of our lives; when ſeated in our heart, it diffuſes itſelf into all our motions; when we are wiſe by its wiſdom, ſober by its ſobriety, and humble by its humility; when it is the principle of all our thoughts and deſires, the ſpring of all our hopes and fears; when we like and diſlike, ſeek and avoid, mourn and rejoice, as becomes thoſe who are born again of God. Now this is the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, to give us a *new underſtanding*, a *new judgment*, temper, taſte and reliſh, new deſires, and new hopes and fears. So far therefore, as we *prepare* ourſelves by ſelf-denial for this change of heart and mind; ſo far we *invite* the aſſiſtance, and *concur* with the inſpirations of the Holy Spirit. And ſo far as we nouriſh any fooliſh paſſion, indulge any vanity of mind or corruption of heart; ſo far we *reſiſt the graces* of God's Holy Spirit, and render ourſelves *indiſpoſed* to reliſh and improve his ſecret inſpirations. Chriſtians are therefore to conſider themſelves, not only as men that are to act by a principle of reaſon, but as ſpiritual beings, who have a higher principle of life within them, and are to live by the *wiſdom* and *inſtructions* of the Spirit of God.

As reaſonable men would do every thing that tended to ſtrengthen and improve their reaſon; ſo wiſe Chriſtians ought to practiſe every way of life that can fit them for farther degrees of grace, that can ſtrengthen and preſerve their union with the Spirit of God. For as a man without reaſon, has but the *figure* of a man; ſo a Chriſtian without the Spirit of God, has but the *form* of a Chriſtian. And as the perfection of a man conſiſts in the higheſt improvement of his reaſon; ſo the perfection of a Chriſtian conſiſts in his growth in grace, in the *ſpiritual turn* and *temper* of his heart

heart and mind. Here therefore muſt we fix all our care and concern, that we may remove all hinderances of divine grace, and preſerve this kingdom of God within us; that we may be truly ſpiritual in all our ways and deſigns, and indulge no tempers that may leſſen our union with the Spirit of God.

Some perſons will perhaps refrain from *grief*, when they find that it hurts their *eyes*; they will avoid *paſſion* and *anger*, if it ends in pains of the head; but they would do well to conſider that theſe tempers are to be abſtained from upon much greater accounts. *Paſſion* may diſorder our bodies, waſte our ſpirits, and leave pains in our *heads*; but it leaves greater marks of injury in our better part, as it throws us into a ſtate of madneſs, and *baniſhes* the Holy Spirit of peace and gentleneſs, and *prepares* us for the ſuggeſtions of the ſpirit of darkneſs. *Grief* may hurt our *eyes*, but it much more hurts our *ſouls*, as it ſinks them into a ſtate of gloom and darkneſs, which *expels* and *quenches* the Spirit of God; for light may as well unite with darkneſs, as the Spirit of God dwell with the gloomy dulneſs and horror of ſtupid grief. What I have obſerved of theſe two paſſions, ought to be concluded of every other *paſſion* and *temper*; we are to conſider it as it *ſuits* with, or *reſiſts* that new ſpirit, by whoſe holy motions we are to be preſerved in a ſtate of holineſs.

Now ſeeing this change of our hearts, and *newneſs* of ſpirit, is the whole of religion; we muſt fear and avoid all *irregularity* of ſpirit, every *unreaſonable temper*, becauſe it affects us in the ſeat of life, becauſe it hurts us in our principal part, and makes us *leſs capable* of the graces, and *leſs obedient* to the motions of God's Holy Spirit. We muſt labour after a ſtate of peace, ſatisfaction and thankfulneſs, free from the folly of vain hopes, idle fears, and ſelf anxieties, that our ſouls may be diſpoſed to feel the joys, to rejoice in the comforts, and advance in the graces of the Holy Ghoſt.

With what *care* and *exactneſs* we are to conduct ourſelves, with regard to the Spirit of God, is fully ſet forth in the following words: *Let no corrupt communication*

munication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the uſe of edifying, that it may miniſter grace unto the hearers; and grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you are ſealed unto the day of redemption. (*a*) That we may not here miſtake what is meant by *corrupt communication*, that we may not fancy it only implies ſinful and wicked diſcourſe, the apoſtle adds, *but that which is good to the uſe of edifying, that it may miniſter grace unto the hearers.* So that it is a converſation that does not edify and profit the hearer, that the apoſtle condemns as corrupt, and ſuch as is to be avoided. Let it be obſerved, that the apoſtle does not prohibit this kind of converſation, becauſe it is *uſeleſs*, impertinent, and better to be avoided; but for a reaſon of the utmoſt conſequence, that we may *not grieve the Holy Spirit of God.* This ſhews us, that we Chriſtians are to govern our ſelves by no leſs a rule, than a *conformity* to the Spirit of God; that we are not only to deny our ſelves vain and fooliſh actions, but alſo idle and unedifying diſcourſe, and conduct our ſelves in all our behaviour with ſuch a ſpirit of wiſdom and purity, as may make the Holy Ghoſt *delight* to dwell in us. This rule of perfection is highly conformable to the nature of our religion. For as our religion conſiſts in a *new* heart and *new* ſpirit; it is certain that we are then only arriv'd to the true ſtate of our religion, when it governs our words and actions, and is the *conſtant temper* of our minds at all times, and on all occaſions. A *covetous* man is not only covetous, when he is in his *counting-room*; he is the ſame perſon, and governed by the ſame temper and way of thinking where-ever he is. And the ſame thing is equally true of every way of life, when it has once entered into our heart, and become a ſettled temper; it is not occaſionally exerciſed in this or that place, or at ſet times; but is always in being, and conſtantly diſpoſing us to thoughts and words, and actions ſuitable to it.

Some perſons ſeem to know ſo little of religion that they confine it to acts of *devotion*, and *publick occaſions* of divine ſervice; they don't conſider that it conſiſts

(*a*) Eph. iv. 29.

conſiſts in a *new* heart and *new* ſpirit, and that acts of devotion, prayer and preaching, watchings, faſtings, and ſacraments, are only to fill us with this *new heart and ſpirit*, and make it the common conſtant ſpirit of our lives every day and in every place.

A man may be ſaid to have ſome regard to religion, who is *regular* at places of divine worſhip; but he cannot be reckoned of a *religious ſpirit*, till it is his ſpirit in every place and on every occaſion, till he lives and breathes by it, and thinks, and ſpeaks, and acts according to its motions.

A man may frequent *meetings for mirth*; but yet, if when he is out of them, he gives himſelf unto peeviſhneſs, chagrin and dulneſs, I preſume no one will ſay, that ſuch a man is of a *chearful ſpirit*. It is eaſy to make the application here; if we are only attendants at *places* of religion; if when we are out of thoſe places, we are of another ſpirit, I don't ſay proud or covetous, but vain and fooliſh; if our actions are ſilly, and our converſation trifling and impertinent, our tempers vain and worldly, we are no more of a *religious ſpirit*, than a dull and peeviſh man is of a *chearful ſpirit*, becauſe he is regular at ſome ſet meetings for *mirth*.

If a perſon of *pride* and *vanity* in the general courſe of his life, ſhould yet think himſelf *humble*, becauſe he had his appointed times of praying for *humility*, we might juſtly ſay of him, that he knew nothing of the nature of that virtue: in like manner, if one, whoſe converſation, whoſe diſcourſe and temper in *common life*, are not according to the ſpirit of religion, ſhould yet think himſelf religious, becauſe he had his appointed places of prayer, it might be juſtly ſaid of him, that he was a ſtranger to the nature of true religion. For religion is not ours till we live by it; till it is the religion of our thoughts, words and actions; till it goes with us into every place; ſits uppermoſt on every occaſion; and forms and governs our hopes and fears, our cares and pleaſures. He is the religious man who watches and guards his ſpirit, and endeavours to be always in the temper of religion; who worſhips God in every place by a purity of behaviour;

haviour; who is as fearful of fooliſh thoughts, irregular tempers, and vain imaginations, at one time as at another; who is as wiſe and heavenly at *home*, or in the field, as in the *houſe of God*. For when once religion has got poſſeſſion of a man's heart, and is become as it ought to be, his ruling temper; it is as agreeable to ſuch a one in all places, and at all times, to ſpeak and act according to its directions, as 'tis agreeable to the *ambitious* man to act according to the motions of ambition. We muſt therefore take it for granted, that if we are not religious in our converſation and common temper, we are not religious in our hearts; we may have a *formality* of religion at certain *times* and *places*, but we are not of a *religious ſpirit*.

We ſee every body ſpeaking and converſing according to their *ſpirit* and *temper*; the covetous, the ambitious, the vain and ſelf-conceited, have each of them their proper language ſuitable to their ſpirit and temper, they are the *ſame perſons* in all places, and always talk like themſelves. If therefore we could meet with perſons of a truly religious ſpirit and temper, we ſhould find them like men of other tempers, the ſame perſons in *all places*, and always talking and acting like themſelves. We ſhould find them living by one temper, and converſing with men with the ſame ſpirit that they converſe with God; not one thing in one place, and another in another; not formal and grave at a *funeral*, and mad and frantic at a *feaſt*; not liſtening to wiſdom at *church*, and delighting in folly at home; not angry at one fooliſh thing, and as much pleaſed with another; but ſteady and uniform in the ſame wiſe and religious temper.

Farther, as we are not of a *religious ſpirit*, till it is the ſpirit of our life, and orders our converſation; ſo it is carefully to be obſerved, that if our converſation is vain and fooliſh, it keeps us in a ſtate incapable of religion, by *grieving* the *Holy Spirit*. For, as we can do nothing without the Spirit of God, as it is our *breath*, our *life*, our *light*, and our *ſtrength*; ſo, if we live in ſuch a way as *grieves* and *removes* this Holy Spirit from us, we are as branches that are broke off from the tree

tree, and muſt periſh in the deadneſs and corruption of our nature. Let this therefore teach us to judge rightly of the ſin and danger of *vain*, *unedifying* and *corrupt* communication; it is not the ſin of *idleneſs* or *negligence*; it is not the ſin of a *pardonable infirmity*; it is not a *little miſtake* in ſpiritual wiſdom; but it is a ſin that ſtands between us and the *tree* of life; that oppoſes our whole happineſs, as it *grieves* and *ſeparates* the Holy Spirit from us. Let this alſo teach ſome people the reaſon why they are ſo *dead* and *ſenſeleſs* of religion, and hardly capable of an outward formal compliance with it; they are not guilty of groſs ſins; they have an averſion to *cheating* and *fulneſs*; but at the ſame time have no more feeling or reliſh of religion, than mere *reprobates*. Now the reaſon of it is this, they live in ſuch an *impertinence* of converſation; their own communication is conſtantly upon *filly* and *vain* ſubjects; and they are ſo fond of thoſe who have the talent of converſing in the ſame manner, that they render themſelves *unfit* for the reſidence of the Holy Spirit. Their whole life is almoſt nothing elſe but a courſe of that *filthineſs*, *fooliſh talking and jeſting*, which the apoſtle forbids. Now this kind of converſation may *grieve* the Holy Spirit, for theſe two reaſons; firſt, becauſe it proceeds from too *diſorder'd* a ſoul, for the Holy Spirit to delight in; for ſuch as our converſation is, ſuch is our *heart*; for truth itſelf has aſſur'd us, that *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth ſpeaketh*. If therefore we are delighted with idle *raillery*, fooliſh *jeſtings*, &c. we muſt not think that we are fooliſh, ſo far as *little talk* goes; but we muſt charge ourſelves at home, and be aſſured that it is a fooliſhneſs of heart, a vanity of ſoul that we labour under.

Secondly, another reaſon why this converſation grieves the Holy Spirit, may be this; becauſe it is of great conſequence, and has ſo great an influence in life. We don't ſeem enough to apprehend, either how much *good* or how much *evil* there is in converſation; and I believe it may be affirm'd, that the greateſt inſtructions and the greateſt corruptions proceed from it. If ſome people were to give us their true hiſtory, they would

would tell us that they never had any religion ſince they had ſuch acquaintance; and others have been inſenſibly led into a *ſincere piety*, only by converſing with pious people. For mens common converſation and ordinary life teach much more effectually, than any thing they ſay or do at ſet times and occaſions.

When a clergyman preaches, he is conſider'd as doing his duty; as acting according to his profeſſion; and doing that which all clergymen do, whether *good* or *bad*. But if he is the ſame wiſe and virtuous man in his communication, that he is in the *pulpit*; if his ſpeech be *ſeaſon'd with ſalt*, that it may miniſter grace unto the hearers; if the *common* actions of his life be viſibly govern'd by a ſpirit of piety; ſuch a one will make converts to holineſs; he will be heard with reverence on the *ſunday*, not ſo much for the weight of what he ſays, as for what he ſays and does all the week. And, on the contrary, if a *clergyman*, when he comes out of the *pulpit*, is but like other men; as *irregular* in his tempers; as *trifling* in his converſation; as *eager* in diverſions; and as *ridiculous* in his pleaſures; as *vain* in his deſigns as other people; he will mightily leſſen his power over the hearts of his hearers. A *father* now and then gives his ſon virtuous advice, and the ſon perhaps would be much the better for it; but that he never hears him talking virtuouſly, but when he is giving him advice; this makes him think, that he is then only acting the part of a *father*; as when he is buying him *cloaths*; or putting him out to an *employment*. Whereas, if he ſaw his father's *ordinary life* and converſation to be under the rules of religion, and his every-day temper, a temper of piety; 'tis very likely he would be won into an imitation of it.

A mother orders her daughter to be taught the *catechiſm*, and deſires that ſhe may have books of *devotion*; the daughter would have imagin'd that ſhe was to have formed herſelf by theſe books, ſhe would have read them when ſhe was alone; but that ſhe finds her mother ſits up at night to read *romances*, and if ſhe is ill, muſt be read to ſleep with a *play*. She might have had ſome notion of religious *modeſty* and *humility*; but that ſhe

ſhe ſees her mother eager after *all diverſions*; impatient till ſhe knows *all intrigues*; fond of the wit and flattery of *rakes*; pleas'd with the gentility of *fops*, and the gracefulneſs of *players*.

Now a daughter educated with a mother of this temper and converſation, is render'd almoſt incapable of religion.

This therefore may be one reaſon why a vain unedifying converſation *grieves* the Holy Spirit, *viz.* becauſe it not only proceeds from a corruption of heart, a diſorder'd ſtate of the ſoul; but becauſe it is ſo powerful in its influences, and does ſo much harm to thoſe that we converſe with. For it is our communication, our *ordinary temper* and manner of *common life*, that affects other people, that either hardens them in ſin, or awakens them to a ſenſe of piety. Let therefore all *clergymen*, and *maſters* and *miſtreſſes* of families look carefully to themſelves; let them conſider, that if their *ordinary life*, their communication, be *vain*, *impertinent*, and *unedifying*, that they are not only in a corrupt ſtate of heart, but are guilty of corrupting and perverting the hearts of thoſe that belong to them. Let them not think that they have ſufficiently diſcharg'd their duty, by ſeeing that thoſe who relate to them, have their proper inſtructions; for it is next to impoſſible for ſuch inſtructions to have their proper effect, againſt the temper and example of thoſe we converſe with. If a *clergyman plays*, and *drinks*, and *ſports* with his flock in the week-days, let him not wonder if he preaches them aſleep on *ſundays*. If a *father* is *intemperate*; if he *ſwears*, and converſes *fooliſhly* with his friends; let him not wonder that his children cannot be made virtuous. For there is nothing that teaches to any purpoſe, but our habitual temper, our common life and converſation; and almoſt all people will be ſuch as thoſe, amongſt whom they were born and bred. It is therefore the neceſſary duty of all chriſtians in all ſtates of life, to look carefully to their *domeſtry behaviour*, that it be not the means of poiſoning and corrupting the hearts of thoſe they converſe with. They muſt conſider, that all the follies and im-

pertinences of their common life and converſation, have the guilt of deſtroying ſouls; and that the blood of thoſe, whom their follies have deſtroy'd, will be requir'd at their hands.

It is ſometimes ſaid of a *fooliſh*, *irregular* and *vain* perſon, that he is only his *own enemy*; but this is as abſurd as to ſay, that a perſon of *exemplary* and *eminent* piety is only his *own friend*; for as his lively piety will certainly communicate itſelf to thoſe about him, ſo the folly and impertinent ſpirit of an irregular man will naturally infect thoſe who are oblig'd to be near him.

A miſtreſs whoſe daily converſation is a daily proof to her *maids*, that ſhe is govern'd by a ſpirit of true piety in all that ſhe ſays and does, whoſe regular life is a continual viſible labour to *work out her ſalvation with fear and trembling*, is a bleſſing to all that ſtand about her; ſhe communicates happineſs even to thoſe who are born of her ſervants; they will be educated in piety, becauſe their parents learnt what piety was, in waiting on ſuch a *miſtreſs*.

A good-natur'd, *drinking*, *ſleeping*, *playing*, *ſwearing* *maſter*, is a curſe to thoſe who tend upon him; they are led into all irregularities, by following his ſteps, and are ſent into the world harden'd in follies, and inſenſible of religion, by having lived with ſuch a *maſter*. This therefore ought carefully to be conſider'd by all Chriſtians, as a mighty encouragement to an exact ſtrictneſs and regularity of behaviour; that as a *good converſation* entitles us to a reward for other people's virtues; ſo an *evil communication* and the folly of our lives, makes us liable to a puniſhment for other men's ſins. For we can neither live well or ill to ourſelves alone; but muſt of neceſſity do either good or harm to others, by our manner of converſation. This is one great reaſon why a vain corrupt communication does ſo *grieve* the Holy Spirit, becauſe it is ſo infectious an evil, and does ſo corrupt the manner of thoſe we converſe with. This doctrine of abſtaining from corrupt communication, that we may not *grieve* the Spirit of God, teaches us a high aim, and exalted degree of perfec-

tion, which is peculiar to Chriſtianity. As Chriſtianity lays the deſign of uniting us to God, and raiſing us to a more intimate participation of the divine Nature; ſo we are to make the *ſpirit* of our religion, and the *greatneſs* of its deſigns, the *rule* of our perfection.

We muſt not only conduct ourſelves by rules of morality, but purſue ſuch degrees of purity, as can only be expreſs'd by an *imitation* of God, and aſpire after ſuch wiſdom as is ſuggeſted to us, by conſidering that we are *temples* of the Holy Ghoſt, and muſt live like beings *conſecrated* by the Spirit of wiſdom. If we were frequently to conſider the holy preſence of this God within us, and to aſk ourſelves, Does this diſcourſe, this behaviour, become one who is to act according to the *inſpirations* of the divine Spirit? we ſhould find, that the thought of this dignity of our ſtate, would determine ſeveral points where no expreſs law condemns us; we ſhould find ſuch a contrariety in many of our allowed ways to our Chriſtian greatneſs, to this Holy Spirit that is given unto us, as would ſufficiently check our behaviour, only by ſhewing us that we acted below ourſelves.

It is common in life to hear a man ſay, This does not become a *gentleman*, That does not become a man of *quality*: now I would have us find out ſomething like this in religion; for certainly if any ſtate of life has its dignity, which can excite men to a ſuitable greatneſs of action; ſurely the ſtate of a Chriſtian, which is a ſtate of ſuch relation to God, which unites us to his Holy Spirit, ought to raiſe in us a deſire of acting ſuitable to ſo exalted a condition. For who can be juſtly afraid of acting *below himſelf*, as he that is made one with Chriſt? Who can ſo reaſonably think that he is never wiſe, or holy, or pure enough, as he that is to walk with God in the light of his Holy Spirit, whoſe ſoul and body is made a *ſacred temple* for the divine Preſence?

The *heathen philoſophers* exhorted man to reverence his *reaſon*, as a *ray* of the Deity; but we can go much higher; we can exhort him to reverence the Deity that dwelleth in him, and to act with ſuch purity,

as becomes perſons that are *inſpired* by the Holy Ghoſt.

This is the improvement that we are to make of this doctrine of divine Grace; it muſt make us exact and careful of our behaviour, that we may walk worthy of that Holy Spirit that dwelleth in us.

CHAP. X.

I HAVE ſhewn in the foregoing chapter, that the *neceſſity of divine Grace* is a mighty argument for an univerſal care and exactneſs of life and converſation. I come now to ſpeak to one remarkable branch of it: *Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the uſe of edifying, that it may miniſter grace to the hearers; and grieve not the Holy Spirit of God whereby ye are ſealed to the day of redemption.* Now if we are to let no corrupt communication proceed out of our mouth, that we may not *grieve the Holy Spirit*, and ſeparate him from us; then it follows that we are alſo to deny ourſelves the entertainment of all *corrupt*, *impertinent*, and *unedifying* books. For if vain and idle words are not to proceed out of our mouths, we muſt be under the ſame neceſſity of not letting them enter into our hearts.

If we would know what books are to be avoided as corrupt and grievous to the Holy Spirit, we muſt look back to the rule of our communication; for as that communication is there ſaid to be *corrupt*, that does not *edify* and miniſter grace to the hearers; ſo muſt we look upon all thoſe books as corrupt, which do not improve and confirm our hearts in virtue, or, in the apoſtle's words, ſuch as do not *edify and miniſter grace* to the readers. Now this book-entertainment is as certainly forbidden by the apoſtle, as *cheating* is forbidden by the *eighth* commandment: for if I am not to ſay fooliſh and impertinent things myſelf, becauſe ſuch a communication *grieves* and removes the Holy Spirit of God; I am as certainly forbid the reading the corrupt and impertinent ſayings of other people. The books which moſtly corrupt our hearts, and fill us with a ſpi-

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rit of folly, are ſuch as almoſt all the world allow themſelves to read; I mean, books of *wit* and *humour*, *romances*, *plays*, and other productions of the *poets*. Thus a *grave orthodox* old gentleman, if he hears that his *niece* is very good, and delights in reading, will fill her cloſet with volumes of *plays*, and poems on *ſeveral occaſions*, on purpoſe to encourage her to ſpend her time well. There is not perhaps a more ſurprizing infatuation in the conduct of Chriſtians, than with regard to theſe books.

A father would be very much troubled to ſee his daughter, in converſation, pleas'd with the *lewd* remarks of a *rake*; he would be afraid that ſhe had loſt the virtue of her mind, if ſhe could reliſh ſuch a turn of converſation: yet this ſame father ſhall help his daughter to a volume of *occaſional poems* for her cloſet-entertainment, full of ſuch *groſs immodeſties*, as hardly any *rake* would venture to expreſs in any converſation. It is perhaps a collection of the *poet*'s fineſt, ſtrongeſt, and moſt finiſh'd thoughts in lewdneſs and immodeſty. Every wantonneſs of imagination, every tranſport of paſſion, every extravagance of thought, which ever ſeiz'd him in his life, is there preſerv'd for the meditation of the Chriſtian reader; as if *profaneneſs*, *blaſphemy*, the groſſeſt deſcription of luſt, and the wildeſt ſallies of impure paſſions, were made good and uſeful for a Chriſtian, by being put into *rhime* and *meaſure*. And what ſhews this *infatuation* in a yet higher degree is this, that it is ſtill a prevailing opinion in the world, that the reading virtuous books is a great means of improving in virtue; whereas one would ſuppoſe, that the books I have mention'd could only be allow'd upon belief, that there was neither good nor harm to be got by reading.

But however, let us remember that tho' the way of the world, which is thus inconſiſtent, may allow this *vile* kind of entertainment; yet this is no rule or ſecurity for our conduct, ſince we are no more to make the ſpirit of the world our guide, than we are to make the ſmiles of the world our happineſs. The doctrines of the ſcriptures are the only rule by which we are now to live, and the rule by which we ſhall hereafter be judg-

ed. Now if we will allow ourſelves in the reading *profane*, *impure* and *impertinent* books, which have every thing in them that can *pervert* our underſtandings, and *corrupt* our hearts; tho' the ſcripture forbids all *unedifying diſcourſe*, as a thing that grieves the Holy Spirit, it muſt be ſaid that we act as contrary to ſcripture, as if we indulged and pleaſed ourſelves in *malice* and *revenge*.

You read a *play*; you may poſſibly find in it *ribaldry* and *prophaneneſs*; you fill your mind with extravagant thoughts, lewd intrigues, vain fictions, wanton ideas, and impure deſcriptions. If you aſk me where is the ſin of this, you may as well aſk me where is the ſin of *ſwearing* and *lying*: for it is a ſin not only againſt this or that particular text, but it is a ſin againſt the *whole nature* and ſpirit of our religion; it is a contradiction to all holineſs, and to all the methods of arriving at it. For if evil unedifying communication be forbidden in ſcripture, and for this reaſon, becauſe it grieves the Spirit of God; then the entertainment of ſuch books is certainly forbidden. For certainly the wild rant, the prophane ſpeeches, filthy jeſts, and impure paſſions, which there abound, are an evil communication in the higheſt degree, and muſt therefore highly grieve and ſeparate the Holy Spirit from us. Can therefore any practice be forbid upon a more dreadful penalty than this? for without the Spirit of God, we are but figures of Chriſtians, and muſt die in our ſins. If therefore we can prove it to be a ſmall matter to grieve the Spirit of God, then we may allow that it is but a ſmall offence to pleaſe ourſelves in reading ſuch books as corrupt us. Our bleſſed Saviour ſaith, *Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts*, and that *theſe are the things that defile a man*; muſt it not therefore be a great defilement to take evil thoughts into our hearts? Need we any other motive than this, to watch and guard the purity of our minds? he that notwithſtanding this doctrine of our Saviour's, dares to ſet apart times for the reading the evil and impure thoughts that are in theſe books, does as plainly deſpiſe the doctrine of Chriſt, as he that murders, deſpiſes the doctrine of the ſixth commandment.

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You will ſay perhaps, that you only read theſe books now and then for *amuſement*, and only to *divert* your ſpirits; and that moſt of the time which you devote to reading, is ſpent in reading books that may improve your piety. If this be your caſe, you can ſay that for yourſelf which very few can; for the generality of readers make other books their chief and moſt conſtant entertainment. But to ſpeak now to your excuſe; you only read ſuch books now and then for your amuſement, and to divert your ſpirits; that is, you entertain your mind with *evil* thoughts, you read, reliſh, and digeſt the *lewdneſs*, *prophaneneſs*, and *impurity* of theſe books, not with a ſerious deſign of making yourſelf lewd, prophane, and impure, but only as it were in jeſt, and to have a little pleaſure from them. Now this is the plain meaning of this excuſe, which is as abſurd as any thing can well be ſuppoſed. It is as if a man, who allows himſelf now and then to get *drunk*, and *ſwear*, and *rant*, ſhould ſay in his excuſe, that he is for the moſt part very ſober; and that when he takes theſe liberties, it is not through any deſire or liking of the ſin of drunkenneſs, but only as it were in jeſt, and through the mere gaiety of his bad ſpirits. You will aſk, perhaps, if the ſin of reading *plays* be like the ſin of *drunkenneſs*? I anſwer, very like it, and perhaps equally grievous to the Spirit of God. For are not evil thoughts, vanity of mind, and impurity of heart, the moſt dreadful ſtate that we can be in? can you therefore imagine that the *feeding* and *entertaining* your mind with evil thoughts, and impure diſcourſes, is a leſs ſin than *drinking* too much? what rule of reaſon or ſcripture have you to go by in ſuch a judgment? you may fancy that there is ſomething much more groſs and ſhameful in drunkenneſs, than in this practice; but if you would judge not by fancy, but by the light of religion, you would find, that it is a drunkenneſs and intemperance of the mind, as *groſs* and *ſhameful*, as abominable in the ſight of God, and as contrary to piety, as that ſtupid intemperance which conſiſts in drinking too much.

One great ſhame of drunkenneſs is this, that it fits

us for *ribaldry*, and all the *folly* of diſcourſe; that it makes us ſay ſilly things ourſelves, and be pleaſed with the moſt *fooliſh* rant and *extravagant* nonſenſe of other people. Are not you therefore doing that which is moſt *ſhameful* in drunkenneſs? and is it not a ſign of greater impurity, and greater want of piety, for you *coolly* and *ſoberly* to ſeek and reliſh ſuch *rant* and *folly* of diſcourſe, ſuch profane jeſts and wantonneſs of wit, as men are moſt pleaſed with, when drink has made them *half mad?* Now the liking of ſuch diſcourſe as this, makes up great part of the guilt of drunkenneſs, muſt it not therefore imply a greater guilt in you, who like ſuch fooliſh diſcourſe when you are ſober? *Drunken* men like ill diſcourſe, becauſe reaſon and religion have then no power over them; if therefore you have as falſe a judgment, and reliſh a diſcourſe that is equally fooliſh and mad, muſt it not be owing to the ſame thing, becauſe *reaſon* and *religion* have then no power over you? *Drunken* men like any ſort of madneſs; they are not nice in their taſte; if a diſcourſe be but wild or lewd, they delight in it, but you like only a madneſs that is put into *verſe*; you only delight in the impure deſcriptions and ravings of luſt, when they are adorned with *beautiful* expreſſions, and made *muſical* to the ear. So that the difference betwixt you and a *drunken* man, does not conſiſt in this, that you have a more *religious taſte* or *purity* of mind than he; but in this, that he likes *all ſorts* of rant and wantonneſs of diſcourſe; but you do not like it, unleſs it be in *rhime*, and divided into *acts* and *ſcenes*. He likes a ſong, becauſe it is a *ſong*; but you do not like it, unleſs its impurity and prophaneneſs be made more charming by ſoft and dying ſounds. If therefore a young lady will go to bed with her *play*, ſhe muſt not reckon herſelf better employed than her brother, who is at the ſame time *half mad* over his *bottle*. For it is impoſſible to ſhew, that the entertaining ourſelves with ſuch *evil* thoughts and *filthy* communications is a leſs ſin, than to be ranting over a *bottle*. He that can do this, may alſo prove, that it is a leſs ſin to tell a lye when you are *ſober*, than when you are *drunk*.

Again;

Again; You ſay in your excuſe, that you only read theſe books now and then, to divert your ſpirits, and that you moſtly read good books. Now this excuſe carries its own conviction; for it acknowledges all that is neceſſary to condemn it: for it owns that theſe books are *vain* and *corrupting*, that they are of a contrary nature to good books, and naturally produce contrary effects: and you reckon yourſelf only ſecure from being hurt by them, for this reaſon, becauſe your mind is ſo well ſeaſoned and ſtrengthened by the uſe of good books. But pray conſider the abſurdity of all this: for this is ſaying, I venture into temptations; not becauſe I cannot avoid them, or am ignorant that they are temptations, but becauſe I know myſelf to be *ſtrong*. I read *impure* imaginations, *filthy* jeſts, and *prophane* harangues; not becauſe they are an harmleſs, innocent diverſion; but becauſe the purity and piety of my mind is too great to receive the leaſt injury from them.

Now nothing can be conceived more abſurd and irreligious than ſuch an excuſe as this. Yet what Chriſtian that reads moſt *plays* can poſſibly make a better? for to ſay that our *plays* are not full of *prophane rant*, *filthy jeſts*, and *groſs* deſcriptions of impurity, is the ſame thing as to ſay, that we have no *plays* in Engliſh.

Farther; there is a proper time for every thing that is lawful to be done: now can you tell me when it is proper for a Chriſtian to meditate upon theſe books? Is it to be left to your temper to entertain yourſelf as it ſuits with you, or can your reaſon point out the convenient ſeaſons for it? If you are blindly to follow your temper; then you are in no better ſtate than other people, who are blindly following other tempers. If your reaſon can appoint any time for ſuch entertainment, it muſt be becauſe there is ſome time that is proper for it. Now the different times or ſtates of our mind may perhaps be all comprehended under ſome one of theſe.

There is a time when our hearts are more than ordinarily raiſed towards God; when we feel the joys of religion, and enjoy a peace that paſſes all underſtand-

ing. Now I ſuppoſe reaſon will not allot this time for the diverſion of ſuch books.

There is a time, when either through the neglect of duty, remorſe of mind, worldly vexations, bodily tempers, or the abſence of God's Spirit, that we ſink into dejection and dulneſs, grow burthenſome to ourſelves, and can hardly think of any thing with ſatisfaction. Now if reaſon is to judge, this is of all times the moſt improper for ſuch entertainment. For if there is any time that is more proper than another to think upon God, 'tis when we are *in heavineſs*.

When we are *ſick*, it is time to apply to the *phyſician*; when we are *weary*, it is a proper time to *reſt*; now there is the ſame natural fitneſs in having recourſe to God and religion, when we are under any dejection of mind. For it is not more the ſole property of light to diſpel darkneſs, than it is the ſole property of religion to relieve all uneaſineſs. *Is any one afflicted*, ſays the apoſtle, *let him pray*. Now this we are to look upon, not only as a wiſe advice of ſomething that is very good to be done in affliction; but as a ſtrict command, that leaves us no choice of doing any thing in the ſtead of it.

It is as abſolute a command, as if he ſaid, *Hath any one ſinned, let him repent*. For an application to God, is as much the one thing to be done in the hour of trouble, as repentance is the one thing to be done in time of ſin. Our bleſſed Saviour ſaith, *Be of good comfort, I have overcome the world*. He therefore, that in the want of comfort ſeeks for it in any thing elſe, but in the redemption of Chriſt, in his conqueſt over the world, is no more a true Chriſtian, than he that does not believe in Chriſt.

You ſeem to make times of dulneſs the occaſion of your reading thoſe books, by ſaying that you only read them to *divert* your ſpirits: So that, which you take to be a reaſon for reading them, is a ſtrong objection againſt it. For it is never ſo improper to read thoſe books, as when you want to have your ſpirits raiſed, or your mind made eaſy to itſelf. For it is the higheſt abuſe you can put upon yourſelf, to look for eaſe

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and quiet in any thing, but in right apprehenſions of God's providence. And it is a ſin againſt the *whole nature* of religion, not to make it the whole meaſure and reaſon of all your peace and enjoyment in every occurrence of life.

If you muſt amuſe yourſelf with a volume of *plays*, becauſe you are laid up with a *broken leg*, or have *loſt a friend*, you are as far from wiſdom, as a *child* that is to be made quiet with a *rattle*. A man that drinks *drams* every time he is dull or uneaſy, is a *wiſe*, *prudent*, and *ſober* man, if compared to the Chriſtian that in ſeaſons of dejection has recourſe to *wanton* wit, and *prophane* rant, to divert his ſpirits: He deſtroys the religion and purity of his mind much more effectually, than the other deſtroys the conſtitution and health of his body.

Some people think, that in *great diſtreſſes*, it is proper to ſeek comfort in God and religious reflections; but that in the *little troubles* and vexations of life, any thing that can divert the mind from them, is as well. But this is very abſurd; for ſurely, if God is our proper and ſufficient comfort in great diſtreſſes, he muſt alſo be our *beſt relief* in thoſe that are ſmaller. Unleſs it can be ſaid, that the truths of religion are able to make us bear *perſecution* and *martyrdom* with content, but not great enough to make us eaſy in *little trials*.

Secondly, To ſeek for relief in fooliſh diverſions, is not only applying to a falſe remedy, but is alſo deſtroying the chief power of religion. For as religion has no power over us, but as it is our happineſs; ſo far as we neglect, or refuſe to make uſe of its comforts, ſo far we leſſen and deſtroy its power over us. For it can no otherwiſe be the ordinary daily care of our lives, than by being our conſtant happineſs and conſolation in all the changes and chances of life. A Chriſtian therefore is to make his Chriſtianity his comfort, not only in times of *great trial* and ſufferings, but in all the *leſſer vexations* of life, that by this means every little occaſion of grief or diſquiet may be an occaſion

of

of his being more affected with religion, and made more ſenſible of its true happineſs.

Thirdly, thoſe who are for driving away the common cares, and *little vexations* of human life, by *diverſions*, dont't enough conſider the nature of human life. For the little ordinary troubles of life, make up the *whole trouble* of life; and the reaſon why ſo many people are full of trouble and uneaſineſs, is, becauſe they are unable to bear little ordinary troubles; and they are unable to bear them, becauſe they don't uſe the proper means. For ſince every diſquiet is at ſomething or other that concerns our ſtate and condition, there is no way of relieving us from this diſquiet, but by getting right notions of our condition. If *children* were capable of knowing themſelves, or could be taught the nature of things, we ſhould not uſe ſuch methods of pleaſing them as we do; but as they cannot think and reflect, we never endeavour to reaſon them into content; but if they have loſt one *play-thing*, we only promiſe them another. The application is here very eaſy: For if *men* will make themſelves happy, as children are made happy, not by conſidering the nature of things, but by a *change of amuſements*, they muſt alſo expect to have the vexations and torments of children, and be, like them, laughing and crying at they know not what, all the days of their life: for children are only eaſily vexed, becauſe they are eaſily pleaſed; and it is certain, that they who can be pleaſed with things, without knowing their worth and value, muſt in the ſame degree be liable to be diſpleaſed at things, without knowing their weight and importance. And as this is the true ſtate of childhood; ſo whoſoever is in this ſtate, whatever his *age* may be, his *office* or his *dignity* in life, is yet as truly in the ſtate and folly of childhood, as he that is but four years old: Take an inſtance or two.

A child, whoſe heart is half broken at ſome misfortune, may perhaps be made eaſy with a picture of a *huntſman* and a *pack of hounds*; but if you would comfort the father that grieves for his eldeſt ſon, the *hounds* muſt be all *alive*, they muſt *cry* and *run*, and follow a

hare;

bare; and this will make the father as eaſy, as the *picture* made the child; ſuch happineſs will make him bear the loſs of his ſon.

A mother comforts her little girl with a *pack of cards* that are finely *painted*: By-and-by ſhe wants to be comforted herſelf; ſome great calamity has happened to her. Now you muſt not think to comfort her with *painted cards*, or building houſes with them; her grief is too great, and ſhe has been too long a *mother*, to be pleaſed with ſuch things; it is only *ſerious ombre* that can dry her eyes, and remove ſorrow from her heart.

I might eaſily multiply inſtances of this kind; but theſe are ſufficient to ſhew us, that perſons of *age* and *authority* often differ only from children, as one child may differ from another. This is the true reaſon why human life is ſo full of complaint, why it is ſuch a *mixture* of ridiculous pleaſures, and vain diſquiets; namely, becauſe we live in an entire ignorance of the nature of things, never conſidering why we are pleaſed with this, or diſpleaſed with that, nor any more appeal to religion to correct our judgments, than children appeal to reaſon to form their tempers. For if we will only *play*, or lull ourſelves into repoſe, as children are rocked to ſleep, it is not to be wondered at, if, like them, we *cry* as ſoon as we are *awake*: For every falſe relief that is not founded in reaſon, is only adding to the weakneſs and diſorder of our nature, and making us more liable to farther vexations. For it is abſolutely certain, that a perſon, who is made eaſy by vain and falſe ſatisfactions, is in the ſame degree capable of being made uneaſy by vain and ridiculous vexations. They therefore, who don't think it neceſſary to apply to religion in all the *common* and *ordinary* diſquiets of life, miſtake the nature of human life, not conſidering that it is our applying falſe relief to theſe, that is the occaſion of all our troubles, and that we are *weak* and *impatient*, *fretful* and *diſſatisfied*, for no other reaſon, but becauſe we never made uſe of the right remedy againſt the *ordinary accidents* of life; for had we but learnt to bear *little troubles* and diſappointments

pointments upon right reaſons, becauſe we are Chriſtians, and children of God, we ſhould find but few troubles that would have any great trial in them. And the reaſon why people, *ſeemingly* religious, are ſubject to the ſame *dulneſs* and *peeviſhneſs*, to the ſame *vexations* and variety of griefs, that other people are, is this, becauſe they make no more uſe of their religion on theſe occaſions, than other people: they don't ſo much as intend to keep themſelves *eaſy*, *thankful*, and *chearful*, by making religion the *meaſure* and *ſtandard* of all their thoughts and judgments, in all the common chances of life, any more than thoſe do, who have no thoughts about religion. And this is the reaſon why you ſee them as ridiculous in common life, as vainly pleaſed, and as fooliſhly vexed as other people.

For religion makes no farther difference betwixt people, than ſo far as it is applied. If one man is conſtant at *church*, and another is moſtly abſent, the difference betwixt them may yet be only the difference of frequenting and not frequenting the ſervice of the church. For a religion only carried thus far, makes no farther difference betwixt people. You muſt not therefore expect, that they muſt be different perſons in the ordinary behaviour of their common life; for they may, notwithſtanding this difference, be equally *vain* and *unreaſonable* in their ways, and equally ſlaves to the folly and humour of their *particular temper*. And all this for this plain reaſon, becauſe religion, like any thing elſe, can have no effect but where it is applied.

Suppoſe a perſon had *lame* feet, and *bad* eyes, and that he had an *oil* that was an infallible cure for them both, when applied to both; if you ſaw him only uſing it for his *eyes*, you would not wonder that it had not cured his *feet*; you would know, that his anointing his *eyes* could only cure his *eyes*; and that there was no ground to expect, that his *feet* ſhould be any better, till he anointed his *feet*: and all this for this plain reaſon, becauſe things, however good in themſelves, can have no farther effect than as they are applied. Now it is juſt thus in religion. If it conſiſts only in devotions and *publick worſhip*, it has made this alteration

alteration in a man, that it has taught him to attend to devotion and publick worſhip; it has operated ſo far as he has applied it. But why muſt you wonder, that he is not of a *wiſe*, *virtuous*, and *religious* temper, in all the actions of his ordinary life? is not this wondering why the *oil* has not cured a man's *feet*, when he has never applied it to them, but has only anointed his *eyes*?

When the regular churchman as plainly makes religion the *meaſure* of his common life, as he makes it the *rule* of his going to *church*; when he as directly uſes it to this purpoſe, as a man anoints his eyes, who would be cured by anointing them; then you will ſee him as different in his *ordinary life* from other people, as different in his pleaſures and griefs, in his cares and concerns, as he is different from them in *forms and regularity* of worſhip. But till men do this; till they apply the principles of religion to all the actions of common *life*; till they make it the *meaſure* of all their daily tempers, their joys and fears; till they think there is as much piety in being *wiſe* and *holy* in their common tempers, as in being *devout* at church; as much ſin in being fooliſhly vexed, as in neglecting the divine ſervice; till they thus directly apply religion to common life, as a man applies a remedy to the part that he would have cured; it is no more to be expected, that a religion of *forms of worſhip* and devotion ſhould make a man religious in the common judgments and actions of his ordinary life, than it is to be expected that an *oil*, which is only applied to our *eyes*, ſhould cure our *feet*. So that it is the manner of our common *life*, which carries on a courſe of fears and cares, pleaſures and amuſements, loves and hateds, ſuitable to our *tempers* and *condition* of life; it is this manner of our ordinary life, which we think is thus left to ourſelves, that makes religion ſo inſignificant in the world: it lies by, like a *remedy* that is *unapplied*; it has no effect, becauſe it is uſed only as a *formal thing*, that has its devotions and duties at *ſet times* and occaſions; whereas it ſhould be uſed and conſidered as the *rule and reaſon* of all our judgments and

and actions; as the *meaſure* of all our cares and pleaſures; as the *life* of our life, the ſpirit of our ſpirit, and the very form and eſſence of all our tempers. It is to be in us, like a *new reaſon* and judgment of our minds; that is, to reaſon and judge of every thing that we do, and to preſide over, and govern all the motions of our hearts. *Is any one merry*, ſaith the apoſtle, *let him ſing pſalms; is any one afflicted, let him pray.* This is religion in the apoſtle's account; it is not only an attendance at the publick worſhip, but it is the *ruling habit* of our minds, ſomething that conſtantly devotes us wholly to God, that allows of a mirth proper for the brethren of Chriſt; a mirth that can expreſs itſelf by a rejoicing in God; that allows of no other cure for grief or vexation, than what is to be had from recourſe to God. And, indeed, what can be more ſenſeleſs and abſurd, than to ſee a Chriſtian ever acting in any other conſideration than as a Chriſtian? he is ſenſeleſs to a degree of madneſs, when he indulges a thought, or a motion of his heart; when he either takes a pleaſure, or relieves a grief; where he cannot ſay, I do this as a Chriſtian, as ſuitable to that ſtate in which Chriſtianity has placed me.

We reckon a man ſufficiently *mad* that fancies himſelf a *king*, and governing his ſubjects, at the ſame time that he is ty'd to a bed of *ſtraw*: ſo that madneſs conſiſts in miſtaking our condition, in having a ſet of thoughts not ſuitable to it. Now a *Chriſtian* repeats every day, *I believe the forgiveneſs of ſin, the reſurrection of the body, and the life everlaſting*; he thanks God *for the redemption of Jeſus Chriſt, for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory.* Yet at the ſame time, in this ſtate of *greatneſs*, he fancies himſelf in a *thouſand wants and miſeries.* He cries and labours, and toils for a happineſs, that has no exiſtence but in his *own imagination*; he fancies himſelf a *being*, that is to be made happy with *ſauces* and *ragoús*, with *painted cloaths*, and ſhining *diamonds*; he ſeeks the pleaſures of *rakes* and *libertines*, is grieved and fretted like a child at the loſs of a *feather*; and muſt be diverted, as they are

are, with *ſhews* and *plays*, and imaginary ſcenes of rant and nonſenſe.

Now is not ſuch a one *mad?* does he not know as little of his *ſtate*, as the man in *ſtraw*, that fancies himſelf a *king?* but for a Chriſtian in times of dulneſs or vexation, to ſeek relief in fooliſh amuſements, in the looſe, wild diſcourſes of *plays*, when he ſhould *acquaint himſelf with God, and be at peace*, is a degree of madneſs that exceeds all others; it is acting as contrary to the nature of things, as if a man that had loſt the uſe of his *limbs*, ſhould chuſe to comfort his lameneſs with *painted ſhoes*, when he might have the uſe of his feet reſtor'd. For the conſolations of religion relieve uneaſineſs and trouble, as a *lame* man is relieved when his *limbs* are reſtored; they conquer grief, not by cheating and deluding the weakneſs of our minds, but as the *reſurrection* conquers death, by reſtoring us to a new and glorious life. If you need any further conviction, that times of grief and uneaſineſs are highly improper for theſe *diverſions*; let me deſire you to ſuppoſe that you knew a Chriſtian, who, in his laſt hours, ſent for *buffoons* and *jugglers* to divert his mind from the apprehenſions of *death*. I dare ſay you have religious arguments enough, to prove ſuch a practice to be ſtupid and prophane in the higheſt degree. But, perhaps, you are not aware, that every argument againſt ſuch a practice as this, concludes as ſtrongly againſt the ſame practice at any other time of our life. Try therefore with yourſelf, if every good argument againſt ſuch folly when we are dying, will not be the ſame argument againſt the ſame folly in any other part of our life. For every argument that ſhews the impiety and folly of applying to *fooliſh diverſions*, when we are under the troubles of *death*, will ſhew the ſame impiety and folly of applying to ſuch relief in any *troubles* of life. For to imagine that we may be ridiculous and vain, and fooliſh in the *troubles* of life; but ſerious, holy, and religious in the *troubles* of death, is the ſame folly and abſurdity, as to ſuppoſe, that we muſt be devout and penitent on our death-beds, but need not be devout and penitent in the other parts of our

our life. For as there is no religion or repentance on our death-bed, but what ought to be the religion of our lives; ſo is there no wiſdom or ſeriouſneſs, or application to God in the *ſorrows of death*, but what is equally neceſſary and proper in all the *ſorrows of life*. For we are obliged to live unto God in the ſame manner that we are to die unto God. For why muſt I think rightly of death? why muſt I then apply to God? why muſt I reaſon and judge rightly at that time? why may I not then divert my mind with *looſe* and *impertinent* entertainments? Now give but the true reaſon of this, and you will give the reaſon why I am always to live in the ſame manner. For as the reaſons of wiſdom and holineſs are not founded in death, ſo do they receive no alteration by the approach of death, there is no wiſdom and holineſs but what is equally neceſſary, whether I am twenty *years* or twenty *days* from death. Death may bring me into a greater fear of folly, but it does not bring me into a greater neceſſity of avoiding it, than I was in before; becauſe *all the reaſons* of piety, wiſdom, and devotion to God, have been *equally reaſons* all my life; for the holineſs and wiſdom of perſons in health, is as neceſſary, and as much the terms of acceptance with God, as the holineſs and wiſdom of dying perſons. And he that dares to be fooliſh and vain, and ſeek impertinent entertainments, becauſe he is *ſtrong and in health*, is governed by the ſame ſpirit, and ſins againſt the ſame reaſons of piety, as he that dares to be *vain*, *fooliſh*, and impertinent at the approach of *death*. When therefore you think fit to amuſe yourſelf with fooliſh diverſions, and drive away what you may call dull hours, with the impertinent and wild imaginations of *plays*, *&c.* you muſt remember, that you are under the ſame condemnation as they are, who apply to the ſame relief to eaſe them of the thoughts of death. For as we always ſtand in the ſame relation to God, as he is as much the truth happineſs of *living*, as of *dying* men; ſo wiſdom and holineſs, and right diſpoſitions of our minds, are always duties of the *ſame neceſſity*.

If it were ever lawful to forget our happineſs in God

God, and ſeek for a ridiculous happineſs in vain and extravagant diverſions; if it were ever proper to *live* in this temper, it would be equally proper to *die* in the ſame temper. For we are not upon any *new terms* with God at our death, nor under any other obligations, but ſuch as are equally neceſſary to make us live in his favour.

We often wonder at the worldly-mindedneſs, the hardineſs, impenitence and inſenſibility of *dying men*; but we ſhould do well to remember, that worldly-mindedneſs, folly, impenitence, vanity and inſenſibility, are as much to be wonder'd at in *living, healthful men*; and that they are the ſame odious ſins and as contrary to all ſenſe and reaſon, and make us as unlike to God at one time as at another. Either therefore you muſt ſay, that bad *plays* and ſuch like *books* are proper meditations for dying men; that they keep up a *right turn* of mind, and do not render the ſoul unacceptable to God; or elſe you muſt own, that they are alſo improper at *all other times*. For any thing that indulges a ſtate of mind that is not according to the *wiſdom* and *holineſs* of *religion*, is equally unlawful at *all times*. Again; do but conſider your own notions that you have of *plays*, and you will find, that if you was conſiſtent with your ſelf, you would never read them. Not only you, but the generality of readers, would think it very improper, and contrary to piety, to read *plays* on the *ſunday*. Now I would have you aſk your ſelf, why it would be ſo irreligious to read theſe books on the *ſunday?* is it becauſe there is ſuch a *contrariety* betwixt the ſubjects of ſuch books, and the deſign of the *ſunday?* is it becauſe they are contrary to ſuch meditations as we ſhould make on that day? is it becauſe they are vain, and looſe, and profane; often full of impure thoughts and wanton deſcriptions? There can be no poſſible reaſon given, why we may not read theſe books on the *ſunday*; but becauſe they are thus *contrary* to piety. Need a Chriſtian therefore have any other argument to perſuade him to refrain from theſe books? Is it not a ſufficient proof that they are never to be read, becauſe they are not

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to be read when his mind ought to have a religious turn? Can these books be more thoroughly condemn'd, than by being thought too bad to be open'd on the *sunday?* or need we only stay till *monday*, to be *vain* and *foolish*; to put on a *new temper*, and take delight in such thoughts and reflections, as we durst not touch the day before? If therefore we would be consistent with our selves, we must either prove, that such *books*, are proper meditations for pious Christians; fit for the piety and devotion of the *sunday*; or else acknowledge, that they are equally unfit for their entertainment at any other time: for it is manifestly certain, that we are to indulge *no temper* of mind on any day, that we may not *improve* and *delight* in on the *sunday*.

For to suppose, that we are to have a *new heart* and mind on the *sunday*, different from that *taste* and *temper* which we may indulge all the week, is the same folly as to suppose that we need only be *Christians* on the *sunday*. The difference betwixt *sundays* and other days, does not consist in any difference in the *inward state* of our minds, but in the outward circumstances of the day; as a general rest from our lawful callings, and a publick celebration of divine worship. This is the particular holiness of the *sunday*, which requires a particular rest from labour, and attendance at divine worship; but requires no particular *inward holiness* of the mind, but such as is the necessary holiness of every day. So that whatever is *contrary* to that holiness, purity and wisdom of mind, which is to be our *temper* on the *sunday*, is as much to be abhor'd and avoided all the week as on the *sunday*; because tho' *sunday* differs from other days in *outward marks* of holiness, yet Christians are to be every day alike, as to the *inward state* and temper of their minds.

Therefore, tho' the *labours* of our ordinary employments and other actions, are to be forborn on the *sunday*, and yet are very lawful on other days; yet the case is very different as to these *books*; they are *unfit* to be read at any time, for the *same reason* that they are not fit to be read on *sundays*. And the reason is this, because tho' we may do things on the week days, that we

we ought not to do on the *ſunday*; yet we muſt indulge *no temper*, nor ſupport any *turn of mind*, that is contrary to that purity of heart and mind which we are to aſpire after on the *ſunday*. We may *labour* on the week-days, becauſe *labour* is an *external action*, that is not contrary to any purity or holineſs of mind; but we muſt no more be *covetous* on the week-days than on *ſundays*, becauſe covetouſneſs is a *temper of the mind*, a wrong *diſpoſition* of the heart, that is equally contrary to religion on *all days*.

Now reading is not the labour of our *hands*, or our *feet*; but is the entertainment and exerciſe of the *heart* and *mind*; a delight in either good or bad books, is as truly a *temper* and *diſpoſition* of the heart, as *covetouſneſs* and *pride* is a diſpoſition of the heart. For the ſame reaſon therefore that *pride* and *covetouſneſs* are conſtantly to be avoided on every day of our lives, becauſe they are *wrong tempers* of the mind, and *contrary* to eſſential holineſs; for the ſame reaſon is the *pleaſure* of reading *ill* and *corrupt* books, always to be avoided at all times, becauſe it is a *temper* and *diſpoſition* of our hearts, that is contrary to that ſtate of holineſs which is eſſential to Chriſtianity.

If you was to hear a Chriſtian ſay, that on *ſundays* he abſtained from *evil-ſpeaking*, and *corrupt* communication; but not on the week-days; you would think him either very ignorant of the nature of religion, or very profane. Yet this is as wiſe and religious, as to forbear reading *ill books* and *wanton poems* only on *ſundays*, and to take the liberty of reading them at other times. For that vanity of mind, that fooliſhneſs of heart, that depraved taſte, which can reliſh the wild actions, the lewd ſpeeches, the profane language of mad heroes, diſappointed lovers, raving in all the furious expreſſions of luſt and paſſion, and madneſs, is as *corrupt a temper*, as contrary to holineſs, and as odious on its own account, as *evil ſpeaking* and *malice*.

When therefore you ſee a Perſon reading a *play*, as ſoon as he comes from the *ſunday*'s ſolemnity of public ſervice, you abhor his profaneneſs; but pray be juſt to yourſelf, ſo conſiſtent with common ſenſe,

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as to think every one liable to the *ſame accuſation*, that delights in the ſame book on any other time of the week; and that the difference of reading *plays*, on week-days and not on *ſundays*, is only the difference of *ſpeaking evil* on week-days, and not on *ſundays*.

From theſe reflections, I hope, it ſufficiently appears, that the reading vain and impertinent books, is no matter of indifferency; but that it is juſtly to be reckon'd amongſt our *greateſt corruptions*; that it is as unlawful, as *malice* and *evil ſpeaking*; and is no more to be allow'd in any part of our life, than *pride* or *covetouſneſs*.

Reading, when it is an exerciſe of the mind upon wiſe and pious ſubjects, is next to *prayer*, the beſt improvement of our hearts; it enlightens our minds, collects our thoughts, calms and allays our paſſions, and begets in us wiſe and pious reſolutions; it is a labour that has ſo many benefits, that does ſo much good to our minds, that it ought never to be employ'd amiſs; it enters ſo far into our ſouls, that it cannot have a little effect upon us. We commonly ſay, that a man is known by his *companions*, but it is certain, that man is much more known by the books that he converſes with. Theſe *cloſet-companions*, with whom we chuſe to be alone and in private, are never-failing proofs of the ſtate and diſpoſition of our hearts.

When we are abroad, we muſt take ſuch as the world gives us; we muſt be with ſuch people, and hear ſuch diſcourſe, as the common ſtate of our life expoſes us to. This is what you muſt bear with, becauſe not altogether to be avoided; and as it is not altogether matter of choice, ſo it is no proof of what temper we are of. But if we make our *cloſet* an entertainment of greater vanity and impertinence, than any converſation we can meet with abroad; if *rakiſh libertine* writers are welcome to us in ſecret; if *hiſtories* of ſcandal and *romantick* intrigues are to be with us in our private retirements; this is a plain diſcovery of our *inſide*, and is a manifeſt proof, that we are as vain, and fooliſh and vicious, as the *authors* that we chuſe to read. If a *wanton poem* pleaſes you, you may fairly reckon you

ſelf in the ſame ſtate and condition with him that made it. In like manner, if hiſtories of *nonſenſe* and *folly*, if compoſitions of *intrigue* and *ſcandal* ſuit your temper; ſuch books do as truly repreſent your nature, as they repreſent the nature of their authors.

Julia has buried her huſband, and married her daughters; ſince that ſhe ſpends her time in reading. She is always reading *fooliſh* and *unedifying books*; ſhe tells you every time ſhe ſees you, that ſhe is almoſt at the end of the ſillieſt book that ever ſhe read in her life; that the beſt of it is, it is very long, and ſerves to diſpoſe of a good deal of her time. She tells you, that all *romances* are ſad ſtuff, yet is very impatient till ſhe can get all that ſhe can hear of. Hiſtories of *intrigue* and *ſcandal* are the books that *Julia* thinks are always too ſhort. If *Julia* was to drink *drams* in private, and had no enjoyment of her ſelf without them; ſhe would not tell you this, becauſe ſhe knows it would be plainly telling you that ſhe was a *poor diſorder'd ſot*. See here therefore the weakneſs of *Julia*; ſhe would not be thought to be a *reprobate*; yet ſhe lets you know that ſhe lives upon *folly*, and *ſcandal*, and *impertinence*, in her *cloſet*; that ſhe cannot be in *private* without them: that they are the only ſupport of her dull hours; and yet ſhe does not perceive, that this is as plainly telling you, that ſhe is in a *miſerable*, *diſorder'd*, *reprobate* ſtate of mind.

To return: It is reckon'd very dangerous not to guard our eyes; but it is much more dangerous not to guard our *meditations*; becauſe whatever enters that way, enters deeper into our ſouls, than any thing that only affects our ſight. Reading and meditating is that to our ſouls, which food and nouriſhment is to our bodies, and becomes a part of us in the ſame manner; ſo that we cannot do our ſelves either a *little* good, or *little* harm, by the books that we read.

You perhaps think, that it is a *dull taſk* to read only religious and moral books; but when you have the ſpirit of religion; when you can think of God, as your only happineſs; when you are not afraid of the joys of eternity, you will think it a dull taſk to read other

other books. Don't fancy therefore that your heart is right, and that you are well enough affected with religon, tho' you had rather read books upon other ſubjects; for it is there that you are to charge your *dulneſs*; religion has no hold of you; the things of eternity are not the concerns of your mind; it is *dull* and *tireſome* to you to be *wiſe* and *pious*; and that makes it a dull taſk to read books that treat only upon ſuch ſubjects. When it is the care of the ſoul to be humble, holy, pious, and heavenly-minded; when you know any thing of the guilt and miſery of ſin, or feel a real deſire of ſalvation, you will find religious books to be the greateſt joy of your mind.

If you think it dull and tedious to be in wiſe *company*, it is becauſe you are not wiſe your ſelf; ſo if it is dull and tireſome to you, to reflect upon ſubjects of piety and religion; it is as ſure a proof that you are neither *pious* nor *religious*. If therefore you can ſuppoſe, that a wiſe and ſober man may be moſt delighted with the *noiſe* and *revellings* of drunkenneſs; then you may ſuppoſe, that it is poſſible for you to be truly religious, and yet be moſt pleaſed with the *folly* and *impertinence* of corrupt and unedifying books. You perhaps will ſay, that you have ſo much ſpare time for reading, that you think you need not employ it all in reading good books. It may be ſo; you may have alſo more time than you need devote to acts and offices of *charity*; but will you thence conclude, that you may at thoſe times do things *contrary* to charity, and indulge your ſelf in *ſpite* and *miſchief*?

If you have every day more time than you can employ in reading, meditation and prayer; if this time hangs upon your hands, and cannot be turned to any advantage; let me deſire you to go to *ſleep*, or *pick ſtraws*; for it is much better to do this, than to have recourſe to corrupt and impertinent books. Time loſt in *ſleep*, or *picking ſtraws*, is better loſt than in ſuch exerciſe of the mind. Conſider farther, that *idle* and *ſpare time* is a dangerous ſtate, and calls for great care and watchfulneſs; to have recourſe then to evil and impertinent books, is like inviting the devil becauſe you

you are alone. If you could read ill books when you were in haſte, or in a hurry of other matters, it would do you much leſs harm, than to read them, becauſe your time hangs upon your hands. So that that ſeaſon which you take to be an excuſe for ſuch *reading*, is a ſtronger argument againſt it; becauſe evil thoughts and vain ſubjects have twice the effect, and make double impreſſions, when they are admitted at times of leiſure and idleneſs. Conſider again, to what a miſerable unchriſtian ſtate you are reduced, when you are forced to have recourſe to fooliſh books, to get rid of your time. Your fortune perhaps has removed you from the neceſſity of labouring for your *bread*; you have been politely educated in ſoftneſs; you have no trade or employment to take up your time; and ſo are left to be devoured by corrupt paſſions and pleaſures. Whilſt poor people are at hard labour; whilſt your ſervants are drudging in the meaneſt offices of life; you, oppreſſed with *idleneſs* and *indulgence*, are relieving yourſelf with *fooliſh* and *impertinent* books; feeding and delighting a diſorder'd mind with *romantic* nonſenſe, and *poetic* follies. If this be the effect of *riches* and *fortune*, only to expoſe people to the power of diſorder'd paſſions, and give them time to corrupt their hearts with madneſs and folly, well might our Bleſſed Lord ſay, *Wo unto you that are rich?*

When you ſee a *poor creature* drudging in the meaneſt offices of life, and glad of the dirtieſt work to get his *bread*, you are apt to look upon him as a *miſerable wretch*; it raiſes a *mixture* of pity and contempt in you; and you hardly know, whether you *pity* or *diſregard* him moſt. But remember, that every time you ſee ſuch a perſon, you ſee a more reaſonable creature than your ſelf, and one that is much more *ably employed* than you are. He is acting *conformably* to the ſtate of human life, and bearing a hard part with patience; he is doing a work, which, mean as it is, will be looked upon as done unto the Lord; whilſt you trifling in *ſoftneſs* and *pleaſures*, are unable to bear your time, unleſs it be ſtolen away from you by *fooliſh*, *corrupt* and *unedifying* books.

Fancy that you ſaw a *patient Chriſtian*, old, broken, and crooked, with carrying burthens all his life; fancy that you ſaw another Chriſtian lolling in *ſtate* and *ſoftneſs*, and making every day a day of *vanity* and *impertinence*, of *fooliſh readings*, and vain imaginations; which of them do you think is moſt likely to die into the hands of good *angels*, and be carried into *Abraham's boſom?*

But after all, what a vain imagination is it, to think that you have any ſuch thing as *ſpare time?* Is there any time for which you are not accountable to God? Is there any time which God has ſo left to your own diſpoſal, that you may ſacrifice it to the indulgence of vain tempers, and the corruption of your heart? You can no more ſhew this, than you can ſhew that all your time is your own. To talk therefore of *ſpare time*, is to talk of *ſomething* that never did nor ever will belong to any Chriſtian. You may have a *ſpare time* from this or that *labour* or *neceſſity*, you may abate, or change any *particular exerciſe*, you may leave off this or that way, you may take this or that refreſhment, you have all theſe *ſpare times* from particular actions, but you have no *ſpare time* that releaſes you from the laws of Chriſtianity, or that leaves you at liberty not to act by the principles of religion and piety.

You have a *ſpare time* to recreate and refreſh yourſelf, but this time is to be governed by the ſame principles of religious wiſdom, as the time that is ſpent in cares and labours. For your amuſements and pleaſures are only lawful, ſo far as they are directed by ſuch wiſdom and piety, as is to direct your cares and labours. If therefore the providence of God has placed you above the neceſſity of labouring for your livelihood, you muſt not think that you have ſo much *ſpare time* to ſpend, as you pleaſe, but that you are as certainly called to ſome other *labour*, as others are called to labour for their *bread*. Great part of the world is doomed to labour and ſlavery; they have it not in their power to chuſe any other way of life, and their labour is therefore an acceptable ſervice to God, be-

cauſe

cauſe it is ſuch as their ſtate requires. Happy you, therefore, if you knew your happineſs, who have it in your power to be always doing the *beſt things*, who, free from labour and hardſhips, are at liberty to chuſe the *beſt ways* of life, to ſtudy all the arts of *ſelf-improvement*, to practiſe all the ways of doing good, and to ſpend your time in all the nobleſt inſtances of piety, humility, charity, and devotion! Bleſs God, therefore, not becauſe you have *ſpare time*, for that you have none, but that you have *ſpare time* to employ in the beſt ways that you can find; that whilſt others are oppreſſed with burthens, and worn out in ſlavery, you have time, and leiſure, and retirement, to think and meditate upon the greateſt and beſt of things, to enlighten your mind, to correct the diſorders of your heart, to ſtudy the laws of God, to contemplate the wonders of his providence, to convince yourſelf of the vanity and folly of the world, and to comfort and delight your ſoul with thoſe great and glorious things which God has prepared for thoſe that love him. This is the happineſs of being free from labour and want; not to have *ſpare time* to ſquander away in *vanity* and *impertinence*, but to have *ſpare time* to ſpend in the ſtudy of wiſdom, in the exerciſe of devotion, in the practice of piety, in all the ways and means of doing good, and exalting our ſouls to a ſtate of *Chriſtian perfection*.

It is a doctrine of ſcripture, and highly agreeable to reaſon, *That unto whomſoever much is given, of him ſhall much be required.* Conſider therefore, that a life of leiſure, and freedom from want and hardſhips, is *as much* as can well be given you in this world, as it is giving you an opportunity of living wholly unto God, and making all the parts of your life uſeful to the beſt purpoſes. As ſure therefore as it is a ſtate, that has ſo many advantages, that furniſhes you with ſo many means of being eminent in piety, ſo ſure is it, that it is a ſtate from which God expects fruits that are worthy of it. Had it been your *lot* to labour in a *mine*, or ſerve under ſome cruel maſter, you muſt have ſerved as unto God, and in ſo doing, you

had finiſhed the work which God had given you. But as you are free from all theſe ſtates of life, you muſt look upon yourſelf as God's *ſervant*, as called to chuſe that way of labouring and ſpending your time, which may moſt promote that which God deſires to be promoted. God has given you liberty to chuſe, but it is only that you may have the bleſſedneſs of chuſing the *beſt ways* of ſpending your time. Though therefore you are at liberty from ſervile and mean labour, yet you are under a neceſſity of labouring in all good works, and making all your time, and fortune, and abilities, ſerviceable to the beſt ends of life. You have no more time that is your own, than he has that is to live by conſtant labour; the only difference betwixt you and him is this, that he is to be diligent in a poor ſlaviſh labour, that oppreſſes the body, and dulls and dejects the mind; but you in a *ſervice that is perfect freedom*, that renders your body a *fit temple* for the Holy Ghoſt, and fills your ſoul with ſuch light, and peace, and joy, as is not to be found in any other way of life.

Do you think that a *poor ſlave* would diſpleaſe God, by refuſing to act in that painful drudgery that is fallen to his ſhare? And do you think that God will not be more diſpleaſed with you, if you refuſe to act your *full part* in the beſt of labours, or neglect that happy joyful buſineſs of doing good, which your ſtate of life has called you to? Is it expected that *poor people* ſhould make a right uſe of their condition, and turn all their labour into a ſervice unto God? And can you think that you are not obliged to make the proper improvement of your condition, and turn all your *reſt*, and *eaſe*, and *freedom* from labour, into a ſervice unto God? Tell me therefore no more, that you indulge yourſelf in idle amuſements, in vain, corrupt, and unedifying books, becauſe you have *ſpare time*; for it is abſolutely falſe to ſay that you have any ſuch thing; it is alſo ſaying, that becauſe God has given you *ſpare time* from ſervile labour, that you may chuſe the beſt ways of life, devote yourſelf

the moſt divine exerciſes, and become eminent and exemplary in all the inſtances of a holy and heavenly life; therefore you preſume to throw it away in idleneſs and impertinence.

CHAP. XI.

IT is one principal article of our religion to believe, that our Bleſſed Saviour is now at the right hand of God, there making *perpetual interceſſion* for us, till the redemption of mankind is finiſh'd. Prayer therefore is undoubtedly a proper means of drawing near to God, a neceſſary method of reſtoring ſinners to his favour; ſince he, who has conquer'd ſin and death, who is conſtituted Lord of all, is yet, as the *great Advocate* for ſinners, oblig'd to make *perpetual* interceſſion for them.

Whenever therefore we are in the ſpirit of prayer; when our hearts are lifted up to God, breathing out holy petitions to the throne of grace, we have this encouragement to be *conſtant* and *fervent* in it, that we are then joining with an interceſſion at the right hand of God, and doing that for ourſelves on earth, which our Bleſſed Saviour is perpetually doing for us in heaven. This reaſon of prayer is perhaps not much conſider'd; yet it certainly contains a moſt powerful motive to it. For who, that conſiders his redemption as now carrying on by an *interceſſion* in heaven, can think himſelf ſo agreeable to God, ſo like his Saviour, as when the conſtancy of his own prayers bears ſome reſemblance to that never ceaſing interceſſion which is made above? This ſhews us alſo, that we are moſt of all to deſire thoſe prayers which are offer'd up at the *altar*, where the body and blood of Chriſt are joined with them. For as our prayers are only acceptable to God through the merits of Jeſus Chriſt; ſo we may be ſure that we are praying to God in the moſt prevailing way, when we thus pray in the name of *Chriſt*, and plead his merits in the *higheſt manner* that we can.

Devotion may be conſider'd either as an exerciſe of publick or private prayers at ſet times and occaſions; or as a temper of the mind, a ſtate and diſpoſition of

the heart, which is rightly affected with ſuch exerciſes. Now external acts of devotion are like other external actions, very liable to falſeneſs, and are only ſo far good and valuable, as they proceed from a right diſpoſition of heart and mind. Zealous profeſſions of *friendſhip* are but the more abominable hypocriſy for being often repeated, unleſs there be an equal zeal in the heart; ſo ſolemn prayers, and rapturous devotions, are but repeated hypocriſies, unleſs the heart and mind be *conformable* to them. Since therefore it is the heart only that is devout; ſince the regularity and fervency of the heart is the regularity and fervency of devotion; I ſhall conſider devotion chiefly in this reſpect, as it is a *ſtate* and *temper* of the heart. For it is in this ſenſe only, that Chriſtians are called to a *conſtant ſtate* of devotion; they are not to be always on their knees in acts of prayer; but they are to be always in the ſtate and temper of devotion.

Friendſhip does not require us to be always waiting upon our friends in external ſervices; theſe offices have their times and ſeaſons of intermiſſion; it is only the ſervice of the heart, the friendſhip of the mind, that is never to intermit; it is not to begin and end, as external ſervices do; but is to perſevere in a conſtancy like the motion of our heart, or the beating of our pulſe. It is juſt ſo in devotion; *prayers* have their *hours*, their beginning and ending; but that turn of mind, that diſpoſition of the heart towards God, which is the life and ſpirit of prayer, is to be as conſtant and laſting as our own life and ſpirit.

The repeating of a *creed* at certain times, is an act of faith; but that faith, which *overcometh* the *world*, ſtays neither for times nor ſeaſons, but is a living principle of the ſoul, that is always believing, truſting, and depending upon God. In the ſame manner, verbal prayers are acts of devotion; but that prayer which ſaveth, which openeth the gates of heaven, ſtops not at *forms* and *manuals* of devotion; but is a language of the ſoul, a judgment of the heart, which worſhips, adores, and delights in God, at all times and ſeaſons.

The *neceſſity* and *reaſon* of prayer is, like all other duties

duties of piety, founded in the nature of God, and the nature of man. It is founded in the nature of God, as he is the ſole fountain and cauſe of all happineſs; it is founded in the nature of man, as he is weak and helpleſs, and full of wants. So that prayer is an *earneſt application or aſcent of the heart to God, as to the ſole cauſe of all happineſs*. He therefore that moſt truly feels the miſery, corruption and weakneſs, of his own nature; who is moſt fully convinced that a relief from all theſe diſorders, and a true happineſs, is to be found in God alone; he who is moſt fully convinced of theſe two truths, is moſt fully poſſeſſed of the ſpirit of prayer. There is but one way therefore to arrive at a true ſtate of devotion, and that is, to get right notions of our ſelves, and of the divine Nature; that having a full view of the relation we bear to God, our ſouls may as conſtantly aſpire to him, as they as conſtantly aſpire after happineſs. This alſo ſhews us the abſolute neceſſity of all thoſe fore-mention'd doctrines of *humility*, *ſelf-denial*, and *renunciation of the World*. For if devotion is founded in a ſenſe of the poverty, miſery and weakneſs of our nature, then nothing can more effectually deſtroy the ſpirit of devotion, than *pride*, *vanity*, and *indulgence* of any kind. Theſe things ſtop the breath of prayer, and as neceſſarily extinguiſh the flame of devotion, as water extinguiſhes common fire.

If prayer is alſo founded in right notions of God, in believing him to be the ſole fountain and cauſe of all our happineſs; then every thing that takes this truth out of our minds, that makes us *leſs ſenſible* of it, makes us ſo far *leſs capable* of devotion; ſo that worldly cares, vain pleaſures, falſe ſatisfactions, are to be renounced, that we may be able to pray. For the ſpirit of prayer has no farther hold of us, than ſo far as we ſee our wants, imperfections and weakneſs, and likewiſe the infinite fulneſs and all-ſufficiency of God; when we thoroughly feel theſe two great truths, then are we in the true ſpirit of prayer. Would you therefore be in the ſtate and temper of devotion, you muſt practiſe all thoſe ways of life that may humble you in your own ſight; you muſt forbear all thoſe indulgencies and vanities which blind

your heart, and give you falſe notions of yourſelf; you muſt ſeek that way of life, accuſtom yourſelf to ſuch practices, as may beſt convince you of the vanity of the world, and the littleneſs of every thing but God. This is the only foundation of prayer. When you don't enough ſee either your own littleneſs, or the greatneſs of God; when you either ſeek for pleaſure in yourſelf, or think that it is any where to be found, except in God, you put yourſelf out of a ſtate of devotion. For you can deſire nothing, but what you think you want; and you can deſire it only in ſuch a degree, as you feel the want of it. It is certain therefore, that whatever leſſens or abates the feeling of your own wants; whatever takes you from looking to God, as the only poſſible relief of them, ſo far leſſens and abates the ſpirit and fervour of your devotion.

We ſometimes exhort people to fervour in devotion; but this can only mean as to the outward acts of it: for to exhort people to be fervent in devotion, as that implies a temper of the heart, is to as little purpoſe as to exhort people to be *merry* or to be *ſorry*. For theſe tempers always follow the judgments and opinions of our minds; when we perceive things to be as we like them, then we are *merry*; when we find things in a contrary ſtate, then we are *ſorry*. It comes to paſs after the ſame manner in *devotion*; bid a man be fervent in devotion, tell him it is an excellent temper; he knows no more how to go about it, than how to be merry, becauſe he is bid to be ſo. Stay till *old age*, till *ſickneſs*, *misfortunes*, or the approach of *death*, has convinc'd him that he has nothing good in himſelf; that there is nothing valuable in the world; that all that is good, or great, or glorious, is in God alone; and then he will find himſelf as diſpos'd to devotion, and zealous deſires after God, as the man is diſpos'd to chearfulneſs, who ſees things in that ſtate in which he would have them to be. So that the one and only way to be devout, is to ſee and feel our own weakneſs, the vanity of the world, and the greatneſs of God, as dying men ſee and feel them. It is as impoſſible to be *devout* without ſeeing things in *this view*, as it is impoſſible to be *chearful* without perceiving ſomething in

n our condition that is according to *our mind.* Hence therefore we may learn to admire the wiſdom and divinity of the Chriſtian religion, which calls all its members to *humility*, *ſelf-denial*, and a renunciation of *worldly tempers*, as a neceſſary foundation of piety and devotion. It was in theſe practices that our Saviour firſt inſtituted his religion; it was on theſe conditions, that the apoſtle embrac'd it, and taught it to others; it was in theſe doctrines, that the primitive Chriſtians became ſuch worthy followers of our Saviour and his apoſtles. Theſe doctrines are ſtill in the goſpel, and till they are to be found in our lives, we ſhall never find ourſelves in a ſtate of devotion. For I muſt again repeat, what my reader cannot too much reflect upon; that ſince devotion is an earneſt application of the ſoul to God, as the only cauſe and fountain of happineſs; that it is impoſſible for the ſoul to have this deſire, without having ſuch reaſons to produce and ſupport it, as are neceſſary to produce and ſupport other tempers of the mind.

Now it is impoſſible for a man to *grieve* when he finds his condition anſwering his deſires; or to be *over-joy'd* when he finds his ſtate to be full of miſery; yet this is as poſſible, as conſiſtent with our nature, as for a man to *aſpire* after, and *delight* in God as his only happineſs, whilſt he is *delighting* in himſelf and the vanity of the world. So that to pretend to devotion without great *humility*, and an entire renunciation of all *worldly tempers*, is to pretend to impoſſibilities; 'tis as if a man ſhould pretend to be *chearful*, whilſt he is in vexation and impatience; he muſt firſt bring himſelf to a ſtate of ſatisfaction and contentment, and then chearfulneſs will flow from it; ſo he that would be devout, muſt firſt be humble, have a full view of his own miſeries and wants, and the vanity of the world; and then his ſoul will be full of deſires after God. A *proud*, or *vain*, or *worldly-minded* man, may uſe a *manual* of prayers; but he cannot be *devout*, becauſe devotion is the application of an *humble* heart to God, as its only happineſs.

Hence we may alſo perceive, why people of *learn-*

ing and great application to *books*, who ſeem to have retir'd from the corruptions of the world, to ſpend their time in their ſtudies, are yet often not devout. The reaſon is, becauſe devotion is founded in great humility, and a full ſenſe of the vanity and littleneſs of *every thing*, but God; whereas it is often the *ſame vanity* that wears out ſome ſcholars in their *ſtudies*, that wears out other people at *court*, in the *camp*, or at *ſea*. They do not want to be *merchants*, or *colonels*, or *ſecretaries* of ſtate; but they want to be *critics*, *grammarians*, and *hiſtorians*. They, it may be, diſregard riches and equipage; deſpiſe the ſports and diverſions of the *preſent age*; avoid the folly of converſation; but then it is to contemplate the *riches* and *equipage*, the *ſports* and *diverſions* of the ancient *Romans*.

The vanity of ſome *ladies* and *gentlemen* would be touch'd, if you ſhould tell them that they did not underſtand *dreſs*: ſome great *ſcholars* would be more dejected, if you ſhould ſuppoſe them ignorant of a *fold* in the *Roman garments*.

The *bulk* of mankind are ſo dull and taſteleſs, ſo illiterate, as to ſet their hearts upon *current coin*, large *fields*, and flocks and herds of *cattle*. Great learning has raiſed ſome men above this groſsneſs of taſte; their heart only beats at the ſight of a *medal* and *ancient coins*; they are only afraid of dying before they have outdone the world in their collections of *ſhells*, *ſkins*, *ſtones*, *animals*, *flies*, and *inſects*.

You would not expect that a *merchant* ſhould be devout, becauſe he traded in all parts of *Europe*; or, that a *lady* ſhould be pious, becauſe ſhe underſtands all ſorts of *fine work* and *embroidery*. Now if you was to look into the buſineſs of many profound ſcholars; if you was to conſider the nature of ſuch learning as makes the greateſt figure in the world, you will find no more tendency in it to piety and devotion, than there is in *merchandiſe* or *embroidery*.

When men retire into their ſtudies to *change* their nature; to *correct* and *reform* their paſſions; to find out the folly, the falſeneſs, the corruption and weakneſs of their hearts; to *penetrate* into the vanity and emptineſs of all worldly attainments; when they read and meditate

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look grave, ſigh and hang down his head, and ſtay out his *half hour*; but you are ſure that he cannot *really grieve*, and for this reaſon, becauſe he is in a ſtate of feſtival joy, and his returning to his feaſt. Now this is the ſtate of *Crito*, and great numbers of Chriſtians, they are always at a *feaſt*: their life is nothing elſe but a ſucceſſion of ſuch pleaſures, ſatisfactions and amuſements, as affect and hurry their minds, like the feſtival joys of *drinking*, *muſick*, and *dancing*. So that when they go to devotion, they are juſt as capable of it, as a man that is rejoicing at a feaſt is capable of mourning at the ſame time. Let not the reader imagine that this is the caſe only of ſuch great people, as live in ſuch a conſtant ſcene of pleaſure, as their fortunes can procure, for it is a caſe that equally concerns almoſt all ſtates of life. For as a man rejoicing at an ordinary feaſt is as indiſpoſed for grief, as one that is merry at a more ſplendid entertainment; ſo that courſe of pleaſures and worldly delights, which falls in with lower ſtates of life, may render ſuch people as *incapable* of devotion, as they are who have other entertainments provided for them. Now no one wonders that he cannot *put on* grief, when he is rejoicing at a *feaſt*, of any kind; becauſe he knows there is ſufficient reaſon for it, becauſe his mind is then otherwiſe engaged. But if *Crito* would but deal thus faithfully with himſelf, he would as readily own, that he cannot *reliſh* devotion, that his heart does not enter into it, for this reaſon, becauſe it is *otherwiſe* engaged. For people certainly *reliſh* every thing that *ſuits* with the ſtate of life that they live, and can have no taſte or reliſh, but ſuch as ariſes from the way and manner of life that they are in. Whoever therefore finds himſelf unable to reliſh ſtrains of devotion, dull and unaffected with them, may take it for certain, that it is owing to the *way* and *ſtate* of life that he is in; he may alſo be farther aſſured that his life is wanting in the virtues of *humility*, *ſelf-denial*, and a *renunciation of worldly goods*, ſince theſe virtues as naturally *prepare* and *diſpoſe* the ſoul to aſpire to God, as a ſenſe of *ſickneſs* diſpoſes people to wiſh for *health*.

Let

Let us now put theſe things together; it is certain, that devotion, as a temper of the mind, muſt have ſomething to produce it, as all other tempers have; that it cannot be taken up at times and occaſions, but muſt ariſe from the ſtate of the ſoul, as all other tempers and deſires do. It is alſo equally certain, that humility, ſelf-denial, and a renunciation of the world, are the only foundation of devotion, that it can only proceed from theſe, as from its proper cauſes. Here therefore we muſt fix our rule to take the juſt meaſure of ourſelves. We muſt not conſider how many books of devotion we have, how often we go to church, or how often we have felt a warmth and fervour in our prayers; theſe are uncertain ſigns; but we muſt look to the foundation, and aſſure ourſelves, that our devotion neither is, nor can be greater than our humility, ſelf-denial, and renunciation of the world. For as it muſt proceed only from theſe cauſes, ſo it can riſe no higher than they carry it, and muſt be in the ſame ſtate of ſtrength or weakneſs that they are. If our humility is falſe, our ſelf-denial hypocritical and trifling, and our worldly tempers not half mortified, our devotion will be juſt in the ſame ſtate of falſeneſs, hypocriſy, and imperfection. The care therefore of our devotion, ſeems wholly to conſiſt in the care of theſe duties; ſo far as we proceed in them, ſo far we advance in devotion. We muſt alter our lives, in order to alter our hearts; for it is impoſſible to *live* one way, and *pray* another.

This may teach us to account for the ſeveral falſe kinds of devotion which appear in the world; they cannot be otherwiſe than they are, becauſe they have no bottom to ſupport them. Devotion is like *friendſhip*, you hear of it every-where, but find it no-where; in like manner, devotion is every-where to be ſeen in *modes* of worſhip, in *forms* of ſpeech, in outward adorations, but is in *reality* ſcarce to be found. Hence alſo it is, that you ſee as much difference in the devotion, as in the faces of Chriſtians; for wanting its true foundation, being like an affected friendſhip, it has as many *ſhapes*, as there are *tempers* of men. Many people

ple are thus far ſincere in their devotions, that they would be glad to pray devoutly; they ſtrive to be fervent, but never attain to it, becauſe they never took the only poſſible way. They never thought of altering their lives, or of living different from the reſt of the world; but hope to be devout, merely by reading over books of devotion. Which is as odd a fancy, as if a man ſhould expect to be happy, by reading diſcourſes upon happineſs. When theſe people dare take Chriſtianity as it is offered to them in the goſpel, when they deny themſelves, and renounce the world, as our Saviour exhorted his followers, they will then have begun devotion.

Trebonius aſks how often he ſhall pray: he thinks the nicety of the queſtion ſhews the *piety* and *exactneſs* of his heart; but *Trebonius* is deceived, for the queſtion proves, that he is a ſtranger to devotion. *Trebonius* has a friend, he is conſtantly viſiting him, he is never well out of his company; if he is abſent, letters are ſent at all opportunities. Now what is the reaſon that he never aſks how often he ſhall viſit, how often he ſhall delight in, how often he ſhall write to his friend? It is becauſe his friend has his heart, and his heart is his faithful and ſufficient inſtructor. When *Trebonius* has given his heart to God, when he takes God to be as great a good, as ſubſtantial a happineſs as his friend, he will have done aſking how often he ſhall pray.

Julius goes to prayers, he confeſſes himſelf to be a miſerable ſinner, he accuſes himſelf to God with all the aggravations that can be, as having *no health* in him; yet *Julius* cannot bear to be informed of any imperfection, or ſuſpected to be wanting in any degree of virtue. Now can there be a ſtronger proof, that *Julius* is wanting in the ſincerity of his devotions? Is not this a plain ſign, that his confeſſions to God are only words of *courſe*, an humble *civility* of ſpeech to his Maker, in which his heart has no ſhare?

If a man was to confeſs that his *eyes* were bad, his *hands* weak, his *feet* feeble, and his body helpleſs, he would

would not be angry with thoſe that ſuppoſed he was not in perfect ſtrength, or that he might ſtand in need of ſome aſſiſtance. Yet *Julius* confeſſes himſelf to be in great weakneſs, corruption, diſorder, and infirmity; and yet is angry at any one that does but ſuppoſe him defective in any virtue. Is it not the ſame thing as if he had ſaid, *You muſt not imagine that I am in earneſt in my devotions?*

It would be endleſs to produce inſtances of falſe devotion; I ſhall therefore proceed no farther in it, but rather endeavour to explain and illuſtrate that which is true. Devotion, we ſee, *is an earneſt application of the ſoul to God as its only happineſs.* This is devotion conſidered as a *ſtate* and *temper* of the mind. All thoſe texts of ſcripture which call us to God, as our true and only good, which exhort us to a fulneſs of faith, of hope, of joy, and truſt in God, are to be conſidered as ſo many exhortations to devotion; becauſe devotion is only another name for the exerciſe of all theſe virtues. That ſoul is devoted to God, which conſtantly riſes and tends towards God in habits of love, deſire, faith, hope, joy, and truſt. The end and deſign of religion, as it propoſes to raiſe men to a life of glory with Chriſt at the right hand of God, carries a ſtronger reaſon for devotion, than any particular exhortation to pray. *Beloved*, ſaith St. *John*, *It doth not yet appear what we ſhall be; but we know that when he ſhall appear, we ſhall be like him, for we ſhall ſee him as he is.* St. *Paul* alſo ſaith, *As we have born the image of the earthly, we ſhall alſo bear the image of the heavenly.* (*a*)

Now theſe and ſuch like texts ſeem to me to carry the moſt powerful motives to awaken the ſoul into a ſtate of devotion. For as the apoſtle ſaith, *He that hath this hope, purifieth himſelf, even as he is pure:* So he that hath this hope of being taken into ſo glorious an enjoyment of the divine Nature, muſt find his heart raiſed and enlivened in thinking upon God. For theſe truths cannot be believed without putting the ſoul into a ſtate of prayer, adoration, and joy

(*a*) 1 Cor. xv.

joy in God. The ſeeing thus far into heaven, is ſeeing ſo many motives to praiſe and thankſgiving.

It was this view of future glory, that made the apoſtle break out in this ſtrain of thankſgiving, *Bleſſed be the God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who hath begotten us to a lively hope by the reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt from the dead, to an inheritance undefiled, and that fadeth not away.* (*a*) And would we praiſe and adore God with ſuch thankſgiving, as filled the heart of this apoſtle, we muſt raiſe it from a contemplation of the ſame truth, that *incorruptible inheritance* that is prepared for us.

Again; the ſame apoſtle ſaith to the *Philippians, Our converſation is in heaven*, and as the reaſon and motive to this heavenly converſation, he addeth, *Whence we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who ſhall change our vile body, that it may be faſhioned like unto his glorious body.* (*b*) So that the moſt powerful motive to heavenly-mindedneſs, the plaineſt reaſon for our converſation in heaven, is our expectation of Chriſt's glorious appearance, when he ſhall come to put an *end* to the miſeries of this life, and cloath us with robes of immortality. Theſe truths much more effectually raiſe the heart to God, than any particular precepts to prayer; they do not ſo much exhort, as carry the ſoul to devotion; he that feels theſe truths, feels himſelf devout; they leave a light upon the ſoul, which will kindle into holy flames of love and delight in God.

The way therefore to live in true devotion, is to live in the contemplation of theſe truths; we muſt daily conſider the end and hope of our calling, that our minds may be formed and raiſed to ſuch tempers and deſires as are ſuitable to it, that all little anxieties, worldly paſſions, and vain deſires, may be ſwallowed up in one great deſire of future glory. When the heart is in this ſtate, then is it in a ſtate of devotion, tending to God in ſuch a manner as juſtly ſuits the nature of our religion: for whither ſhould our hearts tend, but where our treaſure is? This

(*a*) 1 Pet. i. 3. (*b*) Phil. iii. 20.

This devotion to God, is ſignified in ſcripture, by living by *faith and not by ſight*, when the inviſible things of the other life, are the reaſon, the motive, and the meaſure of all our deſires and tempers. When Chriſtians are thus ſettled in their judgments of things, and tending towards God in ſuch motions and deſires as are ſuitable to them, then are they devout worſhippers of God every where; this makes the common actions of their life, acts of religion, and turns every place into a *chapel*. And it is to this ſtate of devotion that we are all called, not only by particular precepts, but by the whole nature and tenour of our religion.

Now, as all ſtates and tempers of the mind muſt be ſupported by actions and exerciſes ſuitable to them; ſo devotion, which is an earneſt application of the ſoul to God, as its only happineſs, muſt be ſupported and kept alive, by actions and exerciſes ſuitable to it, that is, by *hours* and *forms* of prayer both publick and private. The devotion of the heart diſpoſes us to obſerve ſet times of prayer; and on the other hand, ſet times of prayer as naturally increaſe and enliven the devotion of the heart. It is thus in all other caſes; habits of the mind diſpoſe us to actions ſuitable to them, and theſe actions likewiſe ſtrengthen and improve the habits from whence they proceed.

It is the habitual taſte for *muſick*, that carries people to *conſorts*; and again, it is *conſorts* that increaſe the habitual love of *muſick*. So it is the right diſpoſition of the heart towards God, that leads people to outward acts of prayer; and on the other ſide, it is outward acts of prayer, that preſerve and ſtrengthen the right diſpoſition of the heart towards God. As therefore we are to judge of the ſignificancy of our prayers, by looking to the ſtate and temper of our heart; ſo are we alſo to judge of the ſtate of our heart, by looking to the *frequency*, *conſtancy*, and *importunity* of our prayers. For as we are ſure that our prayers are inſignificant, unleſs they proceed from a right

right heart; ſo unleſs our prayers be *frequent*, *conſtant*, and full of *importunity*, we may be equally ſure, that our heart is not right towards God.

Our bleſſed Saviour has indeed condemn'd one ſort of long prayer. *But when ye pray, uſe not vain repetitions, as the heathens do; for they think they ſhall be heard for their much ſpeaking* (*a*). Now it is not *length*, or a *continuance* of prayer, that is here forbid, but *vain repetitions*; when inſtead of praying the ſame words are only often repeated. *Secondly*, The *heathens* are not here condemned for being *importunate* and *perſevering* in their prayers; but for a *wrong judgment*, a falſe devotion, in that they thought they were heard, becauſe they *ſpoke much*, that is, often repeated the ſame words. So that all that Chriſtians are here forbid, is only this, they are not to think that the *efficacy* of of prayer conſiſts in vain and long repetitions, but are to apply to God upon a better principle, a more enlightened devotion. Now tho' this is plainly all that is here condemn'd; yet ſome people imagine, that a continuance and importunity of prayer is here reproved; and thence conclude, that ſhortneſs is a neceſſary qualification of prayer.

But how willing muſt ſuch people be to be deceived, before they can reaſon in this manner? For the words have plainly no relation to *length* or *ſhortneſs* of prayer; they no more condemn the one than the other; but ſpeak altogether to *another* matter. They only condemn an opinion of the *heathens*, which ſuppoſed, that the excellency and power of prayer conſiſted in a multitude of repetitions. Now to think, that a ſhort prayer is better, becauſe it is *ſhort*, is the ſame error as to hold with the *heathens*, that a prayer is more powerful, the longer the ſame words are repeated. It is the ſame miſtake in the nature of devotion.

But ſuppoſing the meaning of theſe words was ſomething obſcure (which it is not;) yet ſurely it is plain enough, that our Saviour has *expreſly* taught and recommended a *continuance* and *importunity* in prayer. And how perverſely do they read the goſpel, who can fin

(a) Matth. vi. 7.

find his authority againſt ſuch kind of devotion! For can he who was ſo often retiring to *deſarts*, to *mountains*, to *ſolitary* places to pray, who ſpent *whole nights* in prayer; can he be ſuppoſed to have left a reproof upon ſuch as ſhould follow his example? But, beſides the authority of his great example, his doctrine is on no point more plain and certain, than where he teaches frequency, continuance, and importunity in prayer. *He ſpake a parable unto them, to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint. Saying, there was in a city a judge which feared not God, nor regarded man. And there was a widow in that city, and ſhe came unto him ſaying, avenge me of my adverſary. And he would not for a while: but afterwards he ſaid within himſelf; tho' I fear not God, nor regard man; yet becauſe this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her. And ſhall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him?* The apoſtle tells us, that this parable was to teach men to *pray always*, and *not to faint*; and it is plain to any one that reads it, that it has no other intent, but to recommend *continuance* and *importunity*, as the moſt prevailing qualifications of prayer. The widow is relieved; not becauſe ſhe aſk'd relief, but becauſe ſhe *continued* aſking it: and God is ſaid to avenge his elect; not becauſe they cry to him now and then, but becauſe they *cry day and night*. Our bleſſed Saviour teacheth the ſame doctrine in another parable, of a perſon going to his friend to borrow *three loaves* of him at midnight; where it thus concludes: *I ſay unto you, tho' he would not riſe and give him, becauſe he is his friend; yet becauſe of his importunity, he will riſe and give him as many as he needeth.* Here again the ſole ſcope of this paſſage is to ſhew, the great power and efficacy of continuance and importunity in prayer.

Conſider farther in what manner prayer is mentioned in ſcripture. St. *Paul* does not command us to pray, but to *pray without ceaſing* (*a*). The ſame doctrine is thus taught in another place? *continue in prayer* (*b*). And again, *praying always with all prayer and ſupplication in the ſpirit* (*c*). It is ſaid of *Anna*, That ſhe

(*a*) 1 Theſ. v. 17. (*b*) Coloſſ. vi. 2. (*c*) Eph. iv. 17.

ſhe ſerved God in faſting and prayer night and day. Now who can imagine that *ſhortneſs* is any excellency of prayer?

Clito ſays, he deſires no more time for riſing, dreſſing, and ſaying his prayers, than a quarter of an hour. He tells this to his friends; not to ſhew his want of religion, but that he may be thought to underſtand devotion. You tell him that our Saviour's parables teach *continuance* and *importunity* in prayer; that the apoſtles exhort to *pray without ceaſing*, to pray *always*; and that devout perſons are recorded in ſcripture, as praying *night and day.* Still *Clito* is for ſhort prayers. He at laſt finds a text of ſcripture, and appeals to the example of the *angels*; they only ſaid, *Glory be to God on high, and on earth peace, good-will towards men. Clito* takes this to be an argument for ſhort prayer, becauſe the angels had done ſo ſoon; but *Clito* muſt be told, that this is no prayer; it is only a joyful proclamation to men. And ſurely the manner of *angels* ſpeaking to men, can be no rule or meaſure of the devotion of men ſpeaking to God. The angels had no more to tell the world, than this meſſage of joy; but does it therefore follow, that ſinners are to be as ſhort in their addreſſes to God? The ſcripture tells us ſometimes of *voices* from heaven; but it would be ſtrange to make the things that were then ſpoken, the meaſure of our prayers when we call upon God. If *Clito* muſt have an example from heaven, he might have found one much more proper than this, where it is ſaid, *That they reſt not day and night, ſaying, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come* (*a*).

Our bleſſed Saviour ſaith, *But thou, when thou prayeſt, enter into thy cloſet, and when thou haſt ſhut thy door, pray unto thy Father*, &c. (*b*). Now here is indeed no mention of the time that prayer is to be continued; but yet this preparation for prayer, of *entering* into our cloſet, and *ſhutting* the door, ſeems to teach us that it is a work of ſome time; that we are not haſtily to open

(*a*) Rev. iv. 8. (*b*) Matt. vi. 6.

open our door, but to allow ourſelves time to continue and be importunate in our prayers.

How long and how often all people ought to pray, is not to be ſtated by any one particular meaſure; but this we may take as a general rule that relates to all particulars, that every Chriſtian is to pray ſo often and ſo long, as to ſhew a perſeverance and importunity in prayer; as to ſhew that he prays *without ceaſing*; that he prays *always*; and that he *cries* to God *night and day:* for theſe are eſſential qualifications of prayer, and expreſly required in ſcripture. One would think it impoſſible for people to be ſparing in their devotions, who have read our Saviour's parables, which teach us, that the bleſſings of heaven, the gifts and graces of God's Holy Spirit, are given to ſuch as are importunate in their prayers. I ſhall now only add a word or two in favour of frequent and continued prayers.

Firſt, *frequent* and *continued* prayers, are a likely means to beget in us the *ſpirit* of prayer. A man that is often in his cloſet on his knees to God, tho' he may for ſome time perform but a *lip-labour*, will, if he perſeveres, find the very labour of his lips altering the temper of his heart; and that he has learned to pray, by praying often.

This we find to be true in all parts of life, that we catch a ſpirit and temper from ſuch converſation and ways of life as we allow ourſelves in. Uſe is called a ſecond nature, and experience teaches us, that whatever we accuſtom ourſelves to, it will by degrees tranſform our ſpirit and temper into a likeneſs to it.

Credula was for ſome time a tender *mother*, friendly and charitable to her neighbours, and full of good-will towards all people; ſhe is now ſpightful, malicious, envious, and delights in nothing but ſcandal. How came *Credula* thus chang'd? Why, ſhe has been for ſeveral years ſpending her time in *viſiting*; ſhe enter'd in *ſcandal* and *evil ſpeaking* at firſt, merely for the ſake of *talk*; ſhe has gone on talking, till ſhe has talked her very heart and ſpirit into a taſte for nothing elſe: at firſt ſhe only detracted from her neighbours and friends, becauſe ſhe was viſiting; but now ſhe viſits for the

ſake

ſake of detraction. *Credula* is hardened and cruel in evil ſpeaking, for the ſame reaſon that *butchers* are inhuman and cruel, becauſe ſhe has been ſo long uſed to murder the reputation of her neighbours. She has killed all her own family over and over; and if ſhe ſeeks new acquaintance, it is to get freſh matter for ſcandal; now all this change in *Credula* is purely owing to her *indulging* a talkative temper.

Now every thing that we uſe ourſelves to, enters into our nature in *this manner*, and becomes a *part* of us before we are aware. It is common to obſerve that ſome people tell a ſtory ſo long, till they have forgotten that they invented it. This is not as is ſuppoſed, through a bad memory; but becauſe the things, which we make *conſtant* and *familiar*, will by degrees ſteal the approbation of the heart. If therefore we would but be often on our knees, putting up our prayers to God, tho' for a while it was only *form* and *outward* compliance; yet our hearts would by degrees learn the *language* of our mouths. The ſubject of our prayers would become the ſubject of our hearts; we ſhould pray ourſelves into devotion, and it would become a part of us, in the ſame manner that all other ways enter into our nature. Our reaſon and judgment would at laſt conſent to our lips, and by ſaying the ſame things often, we ſhould come to *believe* and *feel* them in a proper manner. For it is a very reaſonable thing to judge of the effects of good cuſtoms, by what we ſee to be the effects of bad ones. They therefore, who are *haſty* in their devotions, and think a little will do, are ſtrangers both to the nature of *devotion* and the nature of *man*; they do not know that they are to *learn* to pray, and that prayer is to be learned, as they learn all other things, by *frequency*, *conſtancy* and *perſeverance*.

Secondly, there is another great advantage in frequent and continued prayers.

The cares and pleaſures of life, the levity, vanity and dulneſs of our minds, make us all more or leſs unfit for our devotions. We enter into our *cloſets* thus unprepared for prayer; now if our petitions are very ſhort, we ſhall end our prayers before our devotion is begun;

before

before we have time to collect our minds, or turn our hearts to the buſineſs we are upon.

Now continuance in prayer, is a great relief againſt theſe indiſpoſitions; not only as it gives the heart leiſure to fall from worldly cares and concerns; but as it exerciſes the mind upon ſuch ſubjects as are likely to abate its vanity and diſtraction, and raiſe it into a ſtate of ſerioufneſs and attention. It is the caſe of all people to find themſelves inconſtant in their prayers, joining heartily with ſome petitions, and wandering away from others; it is therefore but common prudence to continue our prayers, that our minds, which will wander from ſome parts, may have others to join in. If we were maſters of our attention, and could be as fervent as we pleaſed, then indeed fewer words might ſerve for our devotion; but ſince our minds are weak, inconſtant, and ungovernable, we muſt endeavour to catch and win them to devotion, by ſuch means as are ſuited to ſuch a ſtate of weakneſs, dulneſs, and inconſtancy. He that goes to his *cloſet* in a *hurry*, only to repeat a *ſhort form* of words, may pray *all his life* without any devotion; and perhaps he had been a devout man long ago, if it had ever entered into his head, that *meditation* and *continuance* in prayer are neceſſary to excite devotion. If a man was to make it a *law* to himſelf to *meditate* a while before he began his prayers; if he was to force his mind to think what prayer is, what he prays for, and to whom he prays; if he ſhould again make it a rule to ſtop in ſome part of his prayers, to aſk his heart whether it really prays, or to let his ſoul riſe up in ſilence unto God; prayers thus performed, thus aſſiſted by meditation and continuance, would in all likelihood ſoon render the mind truly devout. It is not intended by this, to impoſe *any particular method* upon all people; it is only to ſhew us, that there are *certain means* of aſſiſting our devotion; ſome rules, tho' *little* in themſelves, yet of *great uſe* to render our minds attentive and fervent in our applications to God. It is the buſineſs therefore of every ſincere Chriſtian to be as wiſe as he can in theſe arts and methods of ſelf-government. As we ourſelves know

moſt

moſt of the falſeneſs of our own hearts, of the temper of our minds, and the occaſion of our defects; ſo if we would but be ſo wiſe, as to think the amendment of our hearts the beſt and greateſt work that we can do, every one's reaſon would help him to ſuch uſeful rules as had a peculiar fitneſs to his own ſtate. *Self-reflection* is the ſhorteſt and moſt certain way of becoming truly wiſe and truly pious.

There are *two ſeaſons* of our hearts, which if we would but reflect upon, we might get much knowledge of ourſelves, and learn how to aſſiſt our devotion; I mean, the *time* when we are *moſt affected* with our devotions, and the *time* when we are *moſt indiſpoſed* to pray. Both theſe *ſeaſons* equally ſerve to inſtruct us in the knowledge of ourſelves, and how to govern the motions of our hearts.

Reflect with yourſelf, how it was with you; what *circumſtances* you was in; what had *happened* to you; what you had been *doing*; what *thoughts* you had in your head at ſuch a time, when you found yourſelf *ſo affected* with your devotions. Now if you find out what ſtate you was then in, when you was diſpoſed to pray ſo fervently, then you have found out a certain way of raiſing your devotion at another time. For do but put yourſelf in the ſame ſtate, recal the ſame thoughts, and do as you had then been doing, and you will find the ſame cauſes will again produce the ſame effects, and you will be again in the ſame temper of devotion. If you was then to put down in *writing*, ſome ſhort remembrance of the *chief things* that ever raiſed your heart to fervency of prayer, ſo that you might have recourſe to a full view of them as often as your mind wanted ſuch aſſiſtance, you would ſoon find a benefit that would well reward your labour. On the contrary, whenever you have found yourſelf *very much indiſpoſed* for prayer, reflect with yourſelf, what *ſtate* you was then in; what had *happened* unto you; what *thoughts* you had in your head; what *paſſions* were then awakened; what you had been *doing*, or were *intending* to do; for when you have found out the ſtate that you was then in, you have found out the real hindrances

drances of your devotion, and are made certain what things you are to avoid, in order to keep yourſelf in a temper of devotion.

If you was here again to make ſhort remembrances in *writing*, of the chief things which at ſuch times rendered you indiſpoſed for prayer, and oblige yourſelf frequently to read them and reflect upon them, you would, by this means, ſet a mark upon every thing that did you any hurt, and have a conſtant, faithful information of what ways of life you are moſt to avoid. If in examining your ſtate, you ſhould find that ſometimes *impertinent viſits*, *fooliſh converſation*, or a day idly ſpent in *civil compliances* with the humours and pleaſures of other people, has rendered your mind *dull* and *indiſpoſed*, and leſs *affected* with devotion, than at other times; then you will have found, that impertinent viſits, and ceremonious compliances in ſpending our time, are not *little*, *indifferent* things; but are to be number'd amongſt thoſe things which have a *great effect* upon our minds, and ſuch as are to be daily watched and guarded againſt, by all thoſe who are ſo wiſe as to deſire to be daily alive unto God in the ſpirit and temper of devotion.

I paſs now to another obſervation upon the benefit of frequent prayers.

Thirdly, *frequent* and *continued* prayer is the beſt remedy againſt the power of ſin. I do not mean only as it procures the divine Grace and aſſiſtance; but as it naturally *convinces*, *inſtructs*, and *fortifies* the mind againſt all ſin. For every endeavour to pray, is an endeavour to *feel* the truth of our prayers; to *convince* our minds of the reaſonableneſs and fitneſs of thoſe things, that are the ſubject of our prayers; ſo that he who prays moſt, is one that moſt labours to convince his heart and mind of the guilt, deformity, and miſery of ſin. Prayer therefore, conſidered merely as an *exerciſe* of the heart upon ſuch ſubjects, is the moſt *certain way* to deſtroy the power of ſin; becauſe ſo far as we pray, ſo far we *renew* our convictions, *enlighten* our minds, and *fortify* our hearts by freſh reſolutions. We are therefore to conſider the neceſſity and benefit of prayer, not only as

it is that which God *hears*; but alſo as it is that, which by its natural tendency *alters* and *corrects* our opinions and judgments, and forms our hearts to ſuch ways of thinking, as are ſuitable to the matter of our prayers.

Now this is an unanſwerable argument for *frequency* and *continuance* in prayer; ſince if prayer at all convinces the mind, frequency and continuance in prayer, muſt be the moſt certain way to eſtabliſh the mind in a ſteady well-grounded ſtate of conviction. They therefore who are for ſhort prayers, becauſe they ſuppoſe, that God does not *need* much intreaty, ought alſo to ſhew, that the heart of man does not need aſſiſtance of *much prayer*; that it is ſo regular and uniform in its tendency to God; ſo full of right judgments and good motions, as not to *need* that ſtrength and light, and help, which ariſe from *much praying*. For unleſs this be the ſtate of our hearts, we ſhall want much prayer to *move* and *awake* ourſelves, tho' but little was neceſſary to *excite* the goodneſs of God. If therefore men would conſider prayer, not only as it is an *invocation* of God, but alſo as it is an *exerciſe of holy thoughts*, as it is an endeavour to *feel* and be affected with the great truths of religion, they would ſoon ſee, that tho' God is ſo good, as not to *need* much calling upon; yet that man is ſo weak as to need much aſſiſtance, and to be under a conſtant neceſſity of that help, and light, and improvement which ariſes from praying much.

It is perhaps for this reaſon, that God promiſes to give to thoſe who are *importunate*, and aſk *without ceaſing*, to encourage us to practiſe that exerciſe, which is the moſt natural cure of the diſorders of our ſouls. If God does not give to us at our firſt aſking; if he only gives to thoſe who are importunate; it is not becauſe our prayers make any *change* in God, but becauſe our importunity has made a change in *ourſelves*; it has *altered* our hearts, and render'd us proper objects of God's gifts and graces. When therefore we would know how much we ought to pray, we muſt conſider how much our hearts want to be altered, and remember that the great work of prayer, is to work upon ourſelves; it is not to *move* and affect God, but it is to

to *move* and affect our own hearts, and fill them with ſuch *tempers* as God delights to reward.

Prayer is never ſo good a preſervation againſt ſin, it never ſo corrects and amends the heart, as when we extend it to all the *particulars* of our ſtate, enumerating all our wants, infirmities, and diſorders, not becauſe God needs to be informed of them, but becauſe by this means we inform ourſelves, and make our hearts in the beſt manner acquainted with our true condition. When our prayers are thus particular, deſcending to all the circumſtances of our condition, they become by this means a faithful glaſs to us, and ſo often as we pray, ſo often we ſee ourſelves in a true light.

This is the moſt likely means to raiſe in us proper affections, to make us feel the force and truth of ſuch things, as are the ſubject of our devotions. Don't be content therefore with confeſſing yourſelf to be a *ſinner*, or with praying againſt ſin in *general*, for this will but a little affect your mind, it will only ſhew you to yourſelf in ſuch a ſtate as all mankind are in; but if you find yourſelf out, if you confeſs and lay open the guilt of your own *particular ſins*, if you pray conſtantly againſt ſuch particular ſins as you find yourſelf moſt ſubject to, the *frequent ſight* of your own ſins, and your *conſtant deploring* of their guilt, will give your prayers entrance into your heart, and put you upon meaſures how to amend your life.

If you confeſs yourſelf only to be a *ſinner*, you only confeſs yourſelf to be a *man*; but when you deſcribe and confeſs your *own particular* guilt, then you find cauſe for your own *particular ſorrow*, then you give your prayers all the power they can have, to affect and wound your hearts. In like manner, when you pray for God's grace, don't be ſatisfied with a general petition, but make your prayers ſuitable to your defects; and continue to aſk for ſuch gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, as you find yourſelf moſt defective in; for this will not only give life to your petitions, and make your heart go along with them, but will alſo be the ſureſt means to fit and prepare you for ſuch graces, as you pray for.

Laſtly, this particularity in our prayers, is the greateſt trial of the *truth* of our hearts.

A man perhaps thinks he prays for humility, becauſe he has the word, *humility*, in his prayers. But if he was to branch out humility into all its *particular parts*, he would perhaps find himſelf not diſpoſed to pray for them. If he was to repreſent to himſelf the ſeveral particulars, which make a man *poor in ſpirit*, he would find his heart not deſirous of them. So that the only way to know the truth of our hearts, and whether we really pray for any virtue, is to have all its parts in our prayers, and make our petitions aſk for it in all its inſtances. If the *proud* man was to pray daily, and frequently for humility in all its kinds, and to beg of God to remove him from all occaſions of *ſuch pride*, as is common to his *particular ſtate*, and to diſappoint him in all his attempts, that were contrary to humility, he would find, that ſuch prayers would either conquer his pride, or his pride would put an end to his prayers. For it would be impoſſible to live long in any inſtances of pride, if his daily and frequent prayers were petitions againſt thoſe particular inſtances. Now every one may make his private devotions thus uſeful to him, if he has but piety enough to intend it. For every one may know his own ſtate if he will: we indeed commonly ſay, that people are blind to themſelves, and know the leaſt of their true ſtate. We paſs this judgment upon people, becauſe we ſee them pretending to ſo many virtues, which do not belong to them, and declaiming againſt vices, to which they are the moſt ſubject. Therefore we ſay, that men don't know themſelves; but this is falſe reaſoning.

We ſee people often pretending to be *rich*; now this is not, becauſe they don't know their ſtate, but becauſe they would not have you to know it, and they preſume it poſſible to impoſe upon you. Now the caſe is juſt the ſame in all other pretences. The falſe, the proud, the worldly man that pretends to fidelity, humility, and heavenly affection, knows that he is neither faithful, nor humble, nor heavenly-minded; he no more thinks he has theſe virtues, than a man thinks he has

has a great eſtate, when he endeavours to be thought rich; he knows that he only affects the reputation of theſe virtues, and is only blind in this, that he imagines he impoſes upon you, and paſſes for the man he is not.

Every man therefore has knowledge enough of himſelf, to know how to make his prayers particularly fitted to the corruption and diſorders of his heart; and when he is ſo deſirous of ſalvation, as to enter into ſuch a method of prayer, he will find, that he has taken the beſt means to make his prayers effectual remedies againſt all his ſins. Let me now only add this one word more, that he who has learned to *pray*, has learned the greateſt ſecret of a holy and happy life. Which way ſoever elſe we let looſe our hearts, they will return unto us again *empty* and *weary*. Time will convince the *vaineſt* and *blindeſt* minds, that happineſs is no more to be found in the things of this world, than it is to be dug out of the earth. But when the motions of our hearts, are motions of piety, tending to God in conſtant acts of devotion, love, and deſire, then have we found reſt unto our ſouls; then is it, that we have conquered the miſery of our nature, and neither love nor deſire in vain; then is it, that we have found out a good ſuited to our natures, that is equal to all our wants, that is a conſtant ſource of comfort and refreſhment, that will fill us with peace and joyful expectations here, and eternal happineſs hereafter. For he that lives in the ſpirit and temper of devotion, whoſe heart is always full of God, lives at the *top* of human happineſs, and is the fartheſt removed from all the vanities and vexations, which diſturb and weary the minds of men, that are devoted to the world.

CHAP. XII.

OUR religion teaches us, that as we have *born the image of the earthly, ſo we ſhall bear the image of the heavenly*, that after our death we ſhall riſe to a ſtate of life and happineſs, like to that life and happineſs, which our bleſſed Saviour enjoys at the right hand of

God. Since therefore it is the great end of our religion to make us fellow-heirs with Chriſt, and partakers of the ſame happineſs, it is not to be wondered at, that our religion ſhould require us to be like Chriſt in this life, to imitate his example, that we may enter into that ſtate of happineſs, which he enjoys in the kingdom of heaven.

For how can we think that we are going to the ſon of God, that we are to be hereafter as he is, unleſs we conform to his ſpirit in this life, and make it our great endeavour to be what he was when he was here. Let it therefore here be obſerved, that the *nature* of our religion teaches us this duty in a more convincing manner, than any particular precepts concerning it. For the moſt ordinary underſtanding muſt feel the force and reaſonableneſs of this argument. You are born to depart out of this world, to aſcend to that ſtate of bliſs, to live in ſuch enjoyment of God to all eternity, as our bleſſed Saviour now enjoys; you are therefore to live in the ſpirit and temper that he lived, and make yourſelves firſt like him here, that you may be like him hereafter. So that we need not look for particular texts of ſcripture, which command us to imitate the life of Chriſt, becauſe we are taught this duty by a ſtronger and more convincing authority; becauſe, as the end and deſign of our religion, is to make us one with Chriſt hereafter, partakers of the ſame ſtate of life, ſo it plainly calls us to be one with him here, and to be partakers of the ſame ſpirit and temper in which he lived on earth. When it is ſaid, that we are to imitate the life of Chriſt, it is not meant, that we are called to the ſame manner of life, or the ſame ſort of actions, for this cannot be; but it is certain, that we are called to the ſame ſpirit and temper, which was the ſpirit and temper of our bleſſed Saviour's life and actions. We are to be like him in heart and mind, to act by the *ſame rule*, to look towards the *ſame end*, and to govern our lives by the *ſame ſpirit*. This is an imitation of Jeſus Chriſt, which is as neceſſary to ſalvation, as it is neceſſary to believe in his name.

name. This is the ſole end of all the counſels, commands and doctrines of Chriſt, to make us like himſelf, to fill us with his *ſpirit* and *temper*, and make us live according to the rule and manner of his life. As no doctrines are true, but ſuch as are according to the doctrines of Chriſt, ſo it is equally certain, that no life is regular or Chriſtian, but ſuch as is according to the pattern and example of the life of Chriſt. For he lived as infallibly as he taught; and it is as irregular to vary from his example, as it is falſe to diſſent from his doctrines. To live as he lived, it as certainly the one ſole way of living as we ought, as to believe as he taught, is the one ſole way of believing as we ought. *I am*, ſaith Jeſus, *the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me.* Chriſtians often hear theſe words, and perhaps think that they have enough fulfilled them by believing in Jeſus Chriſt. But they ſhould conſider, that when Jeſus Chriſt ſaith he is the *way*, his meaning is, that his way of life is to be the way in which all Chriſtians are to live, and that it is by living after the manner of his life that any man cometh unto the Father. So that the doctrine of this paſſage is this, that however we may call ourſelves Chriſtians, or diſciples of Chriſt, yet we cannot come unto God the Father, but by entering into that way of life, which was the way of our Saviour's life. And we muſt remember, that there is no other way beſides this; nothing can poſſibly bring us to God, but that way of life, which firſt makes us one with Chriſt, and teacheth us to walk as he walked. For we may as well expect to go to a heaven where Chriſt is not, as to go to that where he is, without the ſpirit and temper which carried him thither. If Chriſtians would but ſuffer themſelves to reflect upon this duty, their own minds would ſoon convince them of the reaſonableneſs and neceſſity of it. For who can find the leaſt ſhadow of a reaſon, why he ſhould not imitate the life of Chriſt, or why Chriſtians ſhould think of any other rule of life? It would be as eaſy to ſhew that Chriſt acted amiſs, as that we need not act after his example.

And to think that these are degrees of holiness, which, tho' very good in themselves, are yet not necessary for us to aspire after, is the same absurdity as to think, that it was not necessary for our Saviour to have been so perfect himself as he was. For, give the reason why such degrees of holiness and purity became our Saviour, and you will give as good a reason for us to aspire after them. For as the son of God took not on him the nature of angels, but the nature of man, as he was in all points made like unto us, sin only excepted; so we are sure, that there was no spirit or temper that was excellent in him, that recommended him to God, but would be also excellent in us, and recommend us to God, if we could arrive at it.

If it should be said, that Jesus was the *Saviour* of the world, that he was born to *redeem* mankind, was the *Son of God*, and therefore in a condition so different from ours, that his life can be no rule of our life. To this it may be answered, that these differences don't make the life of Christ to be less the *rule* and *model* of all Christians. For, as I observed before, it is the *spirit* and *temper* of Christ, that all Christians are to imitate, and not his particular actions; they are to do their *proper work* in that spirit and temper, in which Christ did the work on which he was sent. So that altho' Christians are not redeemers of the world, as he was, tho' they have not his extraordinary powers, nor that great work to finish, which he had; yet they have their work to do in the manner that he did his; they have their part to act, which, tho' it be a different part, must not be performed with a different spirit, but with such obedience to God, such regard to his glory, for such ends of salvation, for such good of others, and with all such holy dispositions, as our blessed Saviour manifested in every part of his life. A *servant* of the lowest order is in a very different state from his master; yet we may very justly exhort such a one to follow the example of a pious and charitable master, not because he can perform the *same instances* of piety and charity, but because he

he may ſhew the *ſame ſpirit* of piety and charity in the actions which are proper to his ſtate. This may ſhew us, that the different ſtate of our Lord and Maſter leaves him ſtill the *exact rule* and *pattern* of his loweſt ſervants, who, tho' they cannot come up to the greatneſs of his actions, may yet act according to that ſpirit from whence they proceeded; and then are they true followers of Chriſt, when they are following his ſpirit and temper, acting according to his ends and deſigns, and doing that in their ſeveral ſtates, which Chriſt did in his.

The Redeemer of the world came into the world to ſave the world; now we muſt enter into this ſame deſign, and make *ſalvation* the greateſt buſineſs of our lives; tho' we cannot like him, contribute towards it, yet we muſt contribute all that we can, and make the ſalvation of our ſelves and others, the one only great care of our lives.

The *poor widow's mites* were but a ſmall matter in themſelves, yet as they were the utmoſt ſhe could do, our bleſſed Saviour ſet them above the larger contributions of the rich. This may encourage people in every ſtate of life to be contented with their *capacity* of doing good, provided that they do but act up to it. Let no one think that he is too low, too mean and private to follow his Lord and Maſter in the ſalvation of ſouls; let him but add his mite, and if it be all that he hath, he ſhall be thought to have done much, and be reckoned amongſt thoſe that have beſt performed their Maſter's will. It is not meant by this, that all people are to be preachers and teachers of religion, no more than all are to be *apoſtles, or all prophets, or all workers of miracles.* Chriſtians are like members of one and the ſame body; they are as different from one another as hands and eyes, and have as different offices to perform; yet may their different parts ſerve and promote the ſame common end. As the *eye cannot ſay to the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again, the head to the feet, I have no need of you* (*a*); ſo neither can the learned teacher ſay, he hath no need of the private

(*a*) 1 Cor. xii. 2.

and unlearned perſon. For the work of ſalvation is carried on by all hands, as well by him that is taught, as by him that teacheth. For an *unlearned* perſon, by being deſirous of inſtruction, and careful to comply with it, may, by theſe very diſpoſitions promote ſalvation in as true a degree, as he that is able and willing to inſtruct. This teachable diſpoſition, may more effectually draw others to a like temper of mind, than another man's ability and care of teaching. And perhaps in many inſtances the ſucceſs of the teacher, is more owing to the manners and example of ſome perſon that is taught, than to the power and ſtrength of the teacher. Therefore tho' as the apoſtle ſaith, all have *not the gift of healing*, tho' all do not *ſpeak with tongues*, yet all have *ſome part* that they may act in the ſalvation of mankind, and may follow their Lord and Maſter in the great work, for which he came down from heaven. We muſt not therefore think, that it is only the buſineſs of *clergymen* to carry on the work of ſalvation, but muſt remember, that we are engaged in the ſame buſineſs, tho' not in the ſame manner. Had the *poor widow* thought herſelf excuſed from taking care of the treaſury, had ſhe thought that it belonged only to the *rich* to contribute to it, we find that ſhe had been miſtaken, and had loſt that great commendation which our Saviour beſtowed upon her. Now it may be, that ſome widows may be ſo very poor, as not to have ſo much as a *mite* to give to the treaſury, who muſt therefore content themſelves with the charity of their hearts; but this can never happen in the buſineſs of ſalvation; here no one can be ſo poor, ſo deſtitute, ſo mean and private, as not to have a *mite* to contribute towards it. For no circumſtances of life can hinder us from being *examples* of piety and goodneſs, and making our lives a *leſſon* of inſtruction to all that are about us. And he that lives an exemplary life, tho' his ſtate be never ſo *poor* and *mean*, is *largely* contributing to the ſalvation of others, and proving himſelf the *beſt* follower of his Lord and Maſter.

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This therefore is the firſt great inſtance in which we are to follow the example and ſpirit of our bleſſed Saviour. He came to ſave the world, to raiſe mankind to a happineſs in heaven; we muſt therefore all conſider ourſelves as called to carry on this *great work*, to concur with our Saviour in this glorious deſign. For how can we think ourſelves to be his *followers*, if we do not follow him in that for which alone he came into the world? How can we be like the Saviour of the world, unleſs the *ſalvation* of the world be our chief and conſtant care? We cannot ſave the world as he ſaved it, but yet we can contribute our mite towards it. *How knoweſt thou, O wife*, ſaith the apoſtle, *whether thou ſhalt ſave thy huſband? Or how knoweſt thou, O man, whether thou ſhalt ſave thy wife?* (*a*) This ſhews very plainly, that *all perſons* may have a great ſhare in the ſalvation of thoſe that are near them, and that they are to conſider themſelves as expreſly call'd to this great work. For the apoſtle uſes it as the ſame argument both to huſband and wife, which ſuppoſes that it is a buſineſs, in which one is as much concern'd as the other. The *woman* we know is not allow'd to ſpeak in the *church*, yet is ſhe intruſted with *ſome ſhare* in the ſalvation of the world, ſhe is called to this great work, and ſuppoſed equally capable of ſaving the huſband, as the huſband of ſaving the wife. Now what is here ſaid of huſband and wife, we muſt extend to *every ſtate* and relation of this life; *brothers* and *ſiſters*, *relations*, *friends*, and *neighbours*, muſt all conſider themſelves, as called to the *edification* and ſalvation of one another. How knoweſt thou, O *ſiſter*, whether thou ſhalt ſave thy *brother?* How knoweſt thou, O *man*, whether thou ſhalt ſave thy *neighbour?* is a way of thinking, that ought never to be out of our minds. For this would make brothers and ſiſters bear with one another, if they conſidered, that they are to do that for one another, which Chriſt has done for all the world. This reflection would turn our anger towards bad relations, into care and tenderneſs for their ſouls; we ſhould not be glad to get away from them, but give them

(*a*) 1 Cor. vii. 16.

them more of our company, and be more exact in our behaviour towards them, always ſuppoſing it poſſible, that our *good converſation* may ſome time or other affect them, and that God may make uſe of us as a means of their ſalvation.

Eutropius is very good and pious himſelf; but then his fault is, that he ſeeks only the converſation of pious and good people; he is careful and exact in his behaviour towards his virtuous friends and acquaintance, always ſtudying to oblige them, and never thinking he has done enough for them; but gets away from, and avoids thoſe that are of another temper. Now *Eutropius* ſhould recollect, that this is acting like a *phyſician* that would take care of the *healthy*, and diſregard thoſe that are *ſick*. He ſhould remember, that his irreligious friends and relations are the very perſons that are fallen to his care, to be edify'd by him, and that he is as directly called to take care of their ſalvation, as the huſband to take care of the unbelieving wife. *Eutropius* therefore, if he would imitate his Lord and maſter, muſt apply to the *loſt ſheep of the houſe of Iſrael*, and endeavour, by all the innocent arts of pleaſing and converſing with his friends, to gain them to repentance. We muſt not excuſe ourſelves from this care, by ſaying that our relations are obſtinate, hardened, and careleſs of all our behaviour towards them, but muſt ſupport ourſelves with the apoſtle's argument, How knoweſt thou, O man, whether it will be always ſo, or whether thou may'ſt not at laſt ſave thy relation?

The apoſtle ſaith, *Deſtroy not him with thy meat for whom Chriſt died.* (*a*) We may therefore juſtly reaſon thus with ourſelves, that as it lies much in our power to hinder the ſalvation, ſo it muſt be in our power in an equal degree to edify and promote the ſalvation of thoſe whom Jeſus Chriſt died to ſave. Deſtroy not therefore by thy negligence, by thy impatience, by thy want of care, that relation for whom Chriſt died, nor think that thou haſt done enough to ſave thoſe that relate to thee, till there is no more that thou canſt do

(*a*) Rom. xiv. 15.

do for them. This is the ſtate in which all Chriſtians are to conſider themſelves, as appointed by God in their ſeveral ſtations, to carry on that great work, for which Chriſt came into the world. *Clergymen* are not the only men that have a *cure* of ſouls, but every Chriſtian has ſome people about him, whoſe ſalvation he is oblig'd to be careful of, with whom he is to live in all godlineſs and purity, that they may have the benefit of his example and aſſiſtance in their duty to God. So that all Chriſtians, though ever ſo *low* and *mean* and *private*, muſt conſider themſelves as *hired* by Chriſt to work in his *vineyard*; for as no circumſtances of life can hinder us from ſaving ourſelves, ſo neither can they hinder us from promoting the ſalvation of others. Now tho' we have according to our different ſtations, different parts to act; yet, if we are careful of that part which is fallen to our ſhare, we may make ourſelves equally objects of God's favours.

Thou, it may be, art not a *prophet*, God has not honoured thee with this poſt in his ſervice, yet needeſt thou not fall ſhort of this happineſs; for our Saviour hath ſaid, *That he that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet, ſhall receive a prophet's reward.* Now this ſhews us, that tho' all men have not the ſame part to act in the common ſalvation; yet that none will be loſers by that ſtate they are in, if they be but true to the particular duties of it. If they do all the good they can in their *particular ſtate*, they will be looked upon with ſuch acceptance, as the *poor widow* that gave all that ſhe had. Hence we may learn the greatneſs of their folly, who neglecting the exact performance of ſuch duties as fall within their power, are pleaſing themſelves with the great things they would do, were they but in another ſtate.

Clemens has his head full of imaginary piety. He is often propoſing to himſelf what he would do if he had a great eſtate; he would outdo all charitable men that are gone before him: he would retire from the world; he would have no equipage; he would allow himſelf only neceſſaries, that widows and orphans, the

the ſick and diſtreſſed, might find relief out of his eſtate. He tells you, that all other ways of ſpending an eſtate is folly and madneſs.

Now *Clemens* has at preſent a moderate eſtate, which he ſpends upon himſelf in the ſame vanities and indulgences, as other people do: he might live upon one third of his fortune, and make the reſt the ſupport of the poor; but he does nothing of all this that is in his power, but pleaſes himſelf with what he would do, if his power was greater. Come to thy ſenſes, *Clemens*; do not talk what thou wouldſt do, if thou waſt an *angel*, but conſider what thou canſt do as thou art a *man*. Make the beſt uſe of thy *preſent ſtate*, do now as thou thinkeſt thou wouldſt do with a great eſtate, be *ſparing*, *deny* thyſelf, *abſtain* from all vanities, that the poor may be better maintained, and then thou art as charitable as thou canſt be in any eſtate. Remember the poor *widow's mite*.

Fervidus is a regular man, and exact in the duties of religion; but then the greatneſs of his zeal to be doing things that he cannot, makes him over-look thoſe little ways of doing good, which are every day in his power. *Fervidus* is only ſorry that he is not in holy orders, and that his life is not ſpent in a buſineſs the moſt deſirable of all things in the world. He is often thinking what reformation he would make in the world, if he was a *prieſt* or a *biſhop*; he would have devoted himſelf wholly to God and religion, and have had no other care, but how to ſave ſouls. But do not believe yourſelf, *Fervidus*; for if you deſired in earneſt to be a clergyman, that you might devote yourſelf entirely to the ſalvation of others, why then are you not doing all that you can in the ſtate that you are now in? Would you take extraordinary care of a *pariſh*, or a *dioceſe*, why then are you not as extraordinary in the care of your family? If you think the care of other people's ſalvation, to be the happieſt buſineſs in the world, why do you neglect the care of thoſe who are fallen into your hands? Why do you ſhew no concern for the ſouls of your ſervants? If they do their buſineſs for which you hired them, you never trouble your

your head about their Chriſtianity. Nay, *Fervidus*, you are ſo far from labouring to make thoſe that are about you truly devout and holy, that you almoſt put it out of their power to be ſo. You hire a *coachman* to carry you to church, and to ſit in the ſtreet with your *horſes*, whilſt you are attending upon divine ſervice. You never aſk him how he ſupplies the loſs of divine ſervice, or what means he takes to preſerve himſelf in a ſtate of piety. You imagine that if you was a *clergyman*, you would be ready to lay down your life for your flock; yet you cannot lay aſide a *little ſtate* to promote the ſalvation of your ſervants. It is not deſired of you, *Fervidus*, to die a *martyr* for your brethren; you are only required to go to *church* on foot, to ſpare ſome *ſtate* and *attendance*, to bear ſometimes with a little *rain* and *dirt*, rather than keep thoſe ſouls which are as dear to God and Chriſt as yours is, from their *full ſhare* in the common worſhip of Chriſtians. Do but deny yourſelf ſuch ſmall matters as theſe, let us but ſee that you can take the leaſt trouble to make all your ſervants and dependants true ſervants of God, and then you ſhall be allowed to imagine, what good you would have done, had you been devoted to the altar.

Eugenia is a good young woman, full of pious diſpoſitions; ſhe is intending, if ever ſhe has a family, to be the *beſt miſtreſs* of it that ever was, her houſe ſhall be a *ſchool* of religion, and her children and ſervants ſhall be brought up in the ſtricteſt practice of piety; ſhe will ſpend her time, and live in a very different manner from the reſt of the world. It may be ſo, *Eugenia*, the piety of your mind makes me think that you intend all this with ſincerity. But you are not yet at the head of a family, and perhaps never may be. But, *Eugenia*, you have now one maid, and you do not know what religion ſhe is of; ſhe dreſſes you for the church, you aſk her for what you want, and then leave her to have as little Chriſtianity as ſhe pleaſes. You turn her away, you hire another, ſhe comes, and goes no more inſtructed or edified in religion by living with you, than if ſhe had lived with any body elſe. And

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this comes to paſs, becauſe your mind is taken up with greater things, and you reſerve yourſelf to make a whole family religious, if ever you come to be head of it. You need not ſtay, *Eugenia*, to be ſo extraordinary a perſon, the opportunity is now in your hands, you may now ſpend your time, and live in as different a manner from the reſt of the world, as ever you can in any other ſtate. Your *maid* is your family at preſent, ſhe is under your care, be now that religious governeſs that you intend to be; teach her the *catechiſm*, hear her read, exhort her to pray, take her with you to church, perſuade her to love the divine ſervice as you love it, edify her with your converſation, fill her with your own notions of piety, and ſpare no pains to make her as holy and devout as yourſelf. When you do thus much good in your preſent ſtate, then are you that extraordinary perſon that you intend to be; and till you thus live up to your preſent ſtate, there is but little hopes that the altering of your ſtate will alter your way of life.

I might eaſily produce more inſtances of this kind, where people are vainly pleaſing themſelves with an *imaginary* perfection to be arrived at ſome time or other, when they are in different circumſtances, and neglecting that real good which is proper to their ſtate, and always in their power. But theſe are, I hope, ſufficient to ſhew my reader how to examine his own life, and find out himſelf, if I have not done it for him.

There is no falſeneſs of our hearts, that leads us into greater errors, than imagining, that we ſhall ſome time or other be better than we are, or need be now; for *Perfection* has no dependance upon *external* circumſtances, it wants no *times* or *opportunities*; but is then in its higheſt ſtate, when we are making the *beſt uſe* of that condition in which we are placed. The *poor widow* did not ſtay till ſhe was *rich*, before ſhe contributed to the treaſury; ſhe readily brought her mite, and, little as it was, it got her the reward and commendation of great charity. We muſt therefore all of us imitate the wiſdom of the poor widow, and exerciſe every virtue

virtue in the ſame manner that ſhe exerciſed her charity. We muſt ſtay for no time or opportunities, wait for no *change* of life, or *fancied abilities*, but remember that every time, is a time for piety and perfection. Every thing but piety has its hindrances; but piety, the more it is hindered, the higher it is raiſed. Let us therefore not vainly ſay, that if we had lived in our Saviour's days, we would have followed him, or that if we could work miracles, we would devote ourſelves to his glory. For to follow Chriſt as far as we can in our preſent ſtate, and to do all that we are able for his glory, is as acceptable to him, as if we were working miracles in his name.

The greatneſs that we are to aim at, is not the greatneſs of our Saviour's *particular actions*; but it is the greatneſs of his ſpirit and temper, that we are to act by in all parts of our life. Now every ſtate of life, whether *publick* or *private*, whether *bond* or *free*, whether *high* or *low*, is capable of being conducted and governed by the ſame *ſpirit* and *temper*, and conſequently every ſtate of life may carry us to the ſame degree of likeneſs to Chriſt. So that tho' we can in *no reſpect* come up to the actions, yet we muſt in every reſpect act by the ſpirit and temper of Chriſt. *Learn of me*, ſaith our bleſſed Lord, *for I am meek and lowly in heart.* He doth not ſay, be ye in the ſtate and condition that I am in, for that was impoſſible; yet tho' ever ſo different in ſtate and condition, he calls upon us to be like him in meekneſs and lowlineſs of heart and ſpirit, and makes it neceſſary for us to go through our particular ſtate with that ſpirit and temper, which was the ſpirit and temper of his whole life. So far therefore as we can learn the heart and ſpirit of our Saviour; ſo far as we can diſcover the wiſdom, purity, and heavenlineſs of his deſigns; ſo far we have learned what ſpirit and temper we ought to be of, and muſt no more think ourſelves at liberty to act by any other ſpirit, than we are at liberty to chuſe another Saviour.

In all our actions and ways of life we muſt appeal to this rule, we muſt reckon ourſelves no farther living like Chriſtians, than as we live like Chriſt, and be aſſured,

aſſured, that ſo far as we depart from the Spirit of Chriſt, ſo far we depart from that ſtate to which he has called us. For the ſon of God has called us to live as he did, to walk in the ſame Spirit that he walked, that we may be in the ſame happineſs with him when this life is at an end. And indeed who can think that any thing but the *ſame life* can lead to the *ſame ſtate?*

When our bleſſed Saviour was upon the croſs, he thus prayed for his enemies, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.* (*a*) Now all Chriſtians readily acknowledge, that this temper of Chriſt is to be the *exact rule* of our temper on the like occaſion, that we are not to fall ſhort of it, but muſt be perfectly like Chriſt in this charity towards our murderers. But then perhaps they do not enough conſider, that for the very ſame reaſon, every other temper of Chriſt, is as much the *exact rule* of all Chriſtians, as his temper towards his murderers. For are we to be thus diſpoſed towards our perſecutors and murderers, becauſe Chriſt was ſo diſpoſed towards his? And is it not as good an argument, that we are to be ſo and ſo diſpoſed towards the world, and all worldly enjoyments, becauſe Chriſt was ſo diſpoſed towards them? He was as right in one caſe as the other, and no more erred in his temper towards *worldly things*, than in his temper towards his *enemies*. Should we not fail to be good Chriſtians, if we fell ſhort of that forgiving Spirit, which the bleſſed Jeſus ſhewed upon the croſs? And ſhall we not equally fail to be good Chriſtians, if we fall ſhort of that humble and meek Spirit which he ſhewed in all his life? Can any one tell why the temper of Chriſt towards his enemies, ſhould be more the exact meaſure of our temper, than any other ſpirit that he ſhewed upon any other occaſion? Think, *reader*, if thou canſt find a reaſon, why thou may'ſt not as well forgive thy enemies leſs than Chriſt forgave his, as to love the world more than he loved it? If thou can'ſt tell why it is not as dangerous, to be wanting in the humility, meekneſs, and other tempers of Chriſt, as to be wanting in his charity

(*a*) Luke xxiii. 34.

charity towards his enemies. We muſt therefore either own, that we may be good Chriſtians, without the *forgiving ſpirit*, which Chriſt then exerciſed, or we muſt own, that we are not good Chriſtians, whenever we depart from the Spirit of Chriſt in any *other inſtances*. For the Spirit of Chriſt conſiſted as much in meekneſs, humility, devotion, and renunciation of the world, as in the forgiving his enemies: they therefore, who are contrary to Chriſt in any of theſe tempers, are no more like to Chriſt, than they who are contrary to him in this foregiving ſpirit. If you was to ſee a Chriſtian dying without this temper towards thoſe that deſtroyed him, you would be frighted at it; you would think that man in a dreadful ſtate, that died without that temper in which Chriſt died. But then remember, that he judges as rightly, who thinks it equally dreadful to live in any other ſpirit, that is not the Spirit of Chriſt. If thou art not living in that *meekneſs* and *lowlineſs* of heart, in that *diſregard* of the world, that *love of God*, that *ſelf-denial* and *devotion* in which our Saviour lived, thou art as unlike to him, as he that *dies* without that *temper*, in which he died.

The ſhort of the matter is this, the ſpirit and temper of Chriſt is the *ſtrict meaſure* of the ſpirit and temper of all Chriſtians. It is not in this or that particular temper of Chriſt, that we are to follow his example; but we are to aſpire after his whole ſpirit, to be in all things as he was, and think it as dangerous to depart from his ſpirit and temper in one inſtance, as in another. For beſides, that there is the ſame authority in all that our Saviour did, which obliges us to conform to his whole example: can any one tell why we ſhould have more value for this world than our Saviour had? what is there in our *ſtate* and *circumſtances*, that can make it proper for us to have more affection for the things of this life, than our Saviour had? Is the world any more our *happineſs*, than it was his happineſs? are riches, and honours, and pleaſures, any more our *proper good*, than they were his? are we any more born for this life, than our Saviour was? are we leſs in danger of being *corrupted* by its enjoyments, than he was? are

we

we more at leiſure to take up *our reſt*, and ſpend our time in worldly ſatisfactions, than he was? have we a work upon our hands that we can *more eaſily finiſh*, than he could finiſh his? that requires of us leſs *mortification* and *ſelf-denial*, leſs *devotion* and *watching*, than our Saviour's required of him? Now as nothing of this can be ſaid; ſo nothing can be ſaid in our excuſe, if we follow not our Saviour's temper in this reſpect. As this world is as little our happineſs, and more our danger, than it was his; as we have a work to finiſh that requires *all our ſtrength*; that is as contrary to the world as our Saviour's was, it is plain, there was no reaſon or neceſſity of his diſregard of the world; but what is the ſame reaſon and neceſſity for us to diſregard it in the ſame maner.

Again, take another inſtance of our bleſſed Saviour's Spirit: *I came down from heaven* (ſays he) *not to do my own will, but the will of him that ſent me.* (a)

And again, *My meat and drink is to do the will of him that ſent me.* Now can any Chriſtian ſhew, why he may think otherwiſe of himſelf, than our Saviour here thought? or that he need be *leſs devoted* to the glory of God than he was? what is there in our nature and *condition* to make any difference of this kind? Do we not ſtand in the ſame relation to God that our Saviour did? have we not the ſame nature that he had? are we too great to be made happy in the ſame way that he was? or can any thing elſe be the happineſs of our nature, but that which was the happineſs of his? was he *a ſufferer, a looſer?* did he leave the true happineſs of *human life*, by devoting himſelf to the will of God? or can this be our caſe, tho' it was not his? can we be *loſers*, by looking to God *alone*, and *devoting* ourſelves to his glory? was it not the greatneſs and happineſs of our Saviour that he lived to God alone? and is there any other happineſs or greatneſs for us, but by making that the end and aim of our life, which he made the end and aim of his life? for we may as well ſeek out for another God, as for another happineſs, or another way to it, than that in which Chriſt is gone before us.

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(a) John vi. 38.

He did not miſtake the nature of *man*, or the nature of the *world*, he did not overlook any *real felicity*, or paſs by any *ſolid good*; he only made the beſt uſe of human life, and made it the cauſe of all the happineſs and glory that can ariſe from it. To find a reaſon therefore, why we ſhould live otherwiſe than he lived; why we ſhould leſs ſeek the glory of God than he ſought it; is to find a reaſon why we ſhould leſs promote our own greatneſs and glory. For our ſtate and condition in this life lays us under *all the obligations*, that our Saviour was under to live as he did, his life is as much our *right way*, as it was his; and his ſpirit and temper is as *neceſſary* for our condition, as it was for his. For this world and all the things of the world ſignify as *little* to us, as they did to him; we are no more in our *true ſtate*, till we are got out of this world, than he was; and we have no other way to arrive at true felicity and greatneſs, but by ſo *devoting* ourſelves to God, as our bleſſed Saviour did. We muſt therefore make it the great buſineſs and aim of our lives, to be like Chriſt; and this not in a *looſe* or *general* way, but with great *nicety* and *exactneſs*, always looking to his *ſpirit*; to his *ends* and *deſigns*, to his *tempers*, to his ways and converſation in the world, as the *exact model* and *rule* of our lives.

Again, *Learn of me*, (ſaith our bleſſed Saviour) *for I am meek and lowly of heart*. Now this paſſage is to be conſider'd, not as a piece of good advice, that would be of uſe to us, but as a *poſitive* command, requiring a *neceſſary* duty. And if we are commanded to learn of Chriſt meekneſs and lowlineſs, then we are commanded in the ſame poſitive manner, to learn *his meekneſs* and lowlineſs. For if we might take up with a meekneſs and lowlineſs of heart, that was *not his*, then it would not be neceſſary to learn them of him. Since therefore we are commanded to learn them of him, it is plain, that it is his meekneſs and lowlineſs that we are commanded to learn; that is, we are to be meek and lowly; not in any *looſe* or *general* ſenſe of the words; not according to the *opinions* and *practices* of men, but in ſuch *truth* and *reality* as Chriſt was meek and lowly.

It

It ought alſo to be obſerv'd, that there muſt be ſomething very *extraordinary* in theſe diſpoſitions of the heart from the manner in which we are taught them. It is only in this place, that our Saviour ſays expreſly, *Learn of me*; and when he ſays, *Learn of me*, he does not ſay, for I am juſt and equitable, or kind or holy, but *I am meek and lowly of heart*; as if he would teach us, that theſe are the tempers which moſt of all *diſtinguiſh* his Spirit, and which he moſt of all requires his followers to learn of him: for conſider, does Chriſt, when he diſcribes himſelf, chuſe to do it by *theſe tempers?* When he calls upon us to learn of him, does he only mention *theſe tempers?* And is not this a ſufficient proof that theſe are tempers, which the followers of Chriſt are moſt of all oblig'd to learn; and that we are then moſt *unlike* to Chriſt, when we are wanting in them? Now, as our great Lord and Maſter has made theſe characters, the *diſtinguiſhing* characters of his Spirit, it is plain, that they are to be the *diſtinguiſhing* characters of our ſpirit; for we are only ſo far his, as we are like him. Conſider alſo, was he *more lowly* than he need have been? did he practice any degrees of humility that were *unneceſſary!* This can no more be ſaid, than he can be charged with *folly*. But can there be any inſtances of holineſs which became him, that are not neceſſary for us? does our ſtate and condition excuſe us from any kind of humility, that was neceſſary for him? are we higher in our nature, more rais'd in our condition, or more in the favour of God than he was? are there *dignities*, *honours*, and *ornaments* of life which we may delight in, tho' he might not? We muſt own theſe abſurdities, or elſe acknowledge, that we are to breathe the ſame *lowly Spirit*; act with the *ſame meekneſs*; and practice the *ſame humble* behaviour that he did. So that the matter comes plainly to this concluſion; either that Chriſt was more humble and lowly than his nature and condition requir'd, or we are under the ſame neceſſity of as great humility, till we can prove that we are in a higher ſtate than he was.

Now, as it is plainly the meekneſs and lowlineſs of Chriſt,

Chriſt, that we are to practiſe, why ſhould we think that we have attained unto it, unleſs we ſhew forth theſe tempers in *ſuch inſtances*, as our Saviour ſhew'd them? For, can we ſuppoſe, that we are meek and lowly as he was, if we live in *ſuch ways* of life, and ſeek after *ſuch enjoyments* as his meekneſs and lowlineſs would not allow him to follow? Did he miſtake the *proper inſtances* of lowlineſs? If not, it muſt be our great miſtake not to follow his ſteps. Did his lowlineſs of heart make him diſregard the diſtinctions of this life; avoid the honours, pleaſures, and vanities of greatneſs? and can we think that we are living by the ſame lowly ſpirit, whilſt we are ſeeking after all the dignities and ornaments both of our perſons and conditions? What may we not think, if we can think after this manner? For let us ſpeak home to this point; either our Saviour was *wiſe*, *judicious*, and governed by a *divine Spirit* in theſe tempers, or he was not: to ſay that he was not, is horrid *blaſphemy*; and to ſay that he was, is ſaying, that we are neither *wiſe*, *nor judicious*, nor governed by a *divine Spirit*, unleſs we ſhew the *ſame tempers*. Perhaps you will ſay, that tho' you are to be *lowly in heart* like Chriſt, yet you need not diſregard the ornaments, dignities, and honours of life; and that you can be as truly meek and lowly in the *figure and ſhew* of life, as in any other ſtate.

Anſwer me therefore this one queſtion. Was our Saviour's lowlineſs, which ſhew'd itſelf in an utter diſregard of all *pomp* and *figure* of life, a *falſe lowlineſs* that miſtook its *proper objects*, and ſhewed itſelf in things *not* neceſſary? did he abſtain from dignities and ſplendor, and deny himſelf enjoyments which he might with the *ſame lowlineſs* of heart have taken pleaſure in? Anſwer but this queſtion plainly, and then you will plainly determine this point: if you juſtify our Saviour, as being *truly* and *wiſely* humble, you condemn yourſelf, if you think of any *other* humility than *ſuch* as he practis'd. Conſider farther, that if you was to hear a perſon reaſoning after this manner in any other inſtance; if he ſhould pretend to be of an *inward temper* contrary to the *outward courſe* of his life, you would

would think him very abſurd. If a man, that lived in an outward courſe of *duels* and *quarrels*, ſhould ſay, that in his heart he forgave all injuries, and allowed of no reſentments; if another, whoſe common life was full of *bitterneſs*, and *wrath*, and *evil ſpeaking*, ſhould pretend that in his heart he loved his neighbour as himſelf; we ſhould reckon them amongſt thoſe, that were more than a little touched in their heads. Now to pretend to any temper contrary to our *outward actions*, is the ſame abſurdity in one caſe as in another. And for a Man to ſay that he is lowly in heart, whilſt he is ſeeking the *ornaments*, *dignities*, and *ſhew* of life, is the ſame abſurdity, as for a man to ſay, he is of a *meek* and forgiving ſpirit, whilſt he is ſeeking and revenging *quarrels*. For to diſregard and avoid the pomp and figure, and vain ornaments of worldly greatneſs is as eſſential to lowlineſs of mind, as the avoiding of *duels* and *quarrels* is eſſential to meekneſs and charity. As therefore there is but *one way* of being charitable as our Saviour was, and that by ſuch outward actions towards our enemies as he ſhewed; ſo is there but *one way* of being lowly in heart as he was, and that by living in ſuch a diſregard of all vain and worldly diſtinctions, as he lived. Let us not therefore deceive ourſelves; let us not fancy that we are truly humble, tho' living in all the *pride* and *ſplendor* of life; let us not imagine that we have any power to render ourſelves humble and lowly any other way, than by an humble and lowly courſe of life. Chriſt is our *pattern* and *example*; he was content to be *one perſon*; he did not pretend to *impoſſibilities*; to reconcile the *pride* of life with the *lowlineſs* of religion; but renounced the one, that he might be a true example of the other. He had a power of working miracles; but to *reconcile* an humble and lowly heart with the vain *ornaments* of our perſons, the dignities of *ſtate* and *equipage*, was a *miracle* he did not pretend to. It is only for us great maſters in the ſcience of virtue, to have this mighty power; we can be humble it ſeems at leſs *expence* than our Saviour was, without ſupporting our

ſelves

ſelves in it by way of life ſuitable to it; we can have *lowlineſs* in our hearts, with *paint* and *patches* upon our faces; we can deck and adorn our perſons in the ſpirit of humility; make all the ſhew that we can in the *pride* and *figure* of the world, with Chriſtian lowlineſs in ſome *little corner* of our hearts.

But ſuppoſe now that all this was poſſible, and that we could preſerve an humble and lowly temper in a way of life contrary to it; is it any advantage to a man to be one thing in his *heart*, and another thing in his *way of life?* is it any excuſe, to ſay that a man is kind and tender in his heart; tho' his life hath a courſe of contrary actions? is it not a greater reproach to him, that he lives a churliſh life with tenderneſs in his heart? is he not that ſervant that ſhall be beaten with many ſtripes for ſinning againſt his heart and conſcience? Now it is the ſame thing in the caſe before us. Are you *humble* and *lowly* in your heart? is it not therefore a greater ſin in you, not to practiſe humility and lowlineſs in *yourſelf?* If you live contrary to conſcience, are you not in a ſtate of greater guilt? are not lowly actions, an humble courſe of life, as much the proper exerciſe of humility, as a charitable life and actions is the proper exerciſe of charity?

If therefore a man may be excuſed for not living a charitable life, becauſe of a ſuppoſed charity in his heart; then may you think it excuſable to forbear a lowlineſs of life and actions, becauſe of a pretended humility in your mind. Conſider farther; is any thing ſo agreeable to a proud *perſon*, as to *ſhine* and make a *figure* in the pride of life? is ſuch a perſon content with being high in *heart* and *mind?* is he not uneaſy till he can add a way of life *ſuitable* to it? till his *perſon*, his *ſtate* and *figure* in life appear in a degree of pride ſuitable to the pride of his heart? nay, can any thing be a greater pain to a proud man, than to be forced to live in an humble lowly ſtate of life? Now, if this be true of pride, muſt not the contrary be as true of humility? muſt not humility in an equal degree diſpoſe us to ways that are contrary to the pride of life, and *ſuitable* and *proper* to humility? muſt it not be the ſame abſurdity to ſuppoſe a man content with *humility of heart*, without

adding a life *ſuitable* to it; as to ſuppoſe a man content with a *ſecret pride* of his heart, without ſeeking ſuch a *ſtate* of life as is according to it? nay, is it not the ſame abſurdity to ſuppoſe an humble man ſeeking all the *ſtate* of a life of pride, as to ſuppoſe a proud man deſiring only *meanneſs* and *obſcurity*, and unable to reliſh any appearance of pride? Theſe abſurdities are equally manifeſt and plain in one caſe as in the other. So that what way ſoever we examine this matter, it appears that an humility of mind, that is not an humility of *perſon*, of *life* and *action*, is but a mere pretence; and as contrary to common ſenſe, as it is contrary to the *doctrine* and *example* of our Saviour.

I ſhall now leave this ſubject to the reader's own meditation, with this one farther obſervation.

We ſee the height of our calling; that we are called to follow the example of our Lord and maſter; and to go through this world with his ſpirit and temper. Now nothing is ſo likely a means to fill us with his ſpirit and temper, as to be frequent in reading the *goſpels*, which contain the hiſtory of his life and converſation in the world. We are apt to think, that we have ſufficiently read a book, when we have ſo read it, as to know what it contains: this reading may be ſufficient as to many books; but as to the *goſpels*, we are not to think that we have ever read them enough, becauſe we have often read and heard what they contain. But we muſt read them as we do our *prayers*, not to know what they contain, but to fill our hearts with the ſpirit of them. There is as much difference betwixt reading and reading, as there is betwixt praying and praying. And as no one prays well, but he that is daily and conſtant in prayer; ſo no one can read the ſcriptures to ſufficient advantage, but he that is daily and conſtant in the reading of them. By thus converſing with our bleſſed Lord; looking into his actions and manner of life; hearing his divine ſayings; his heavenly inſtructions; his accounts of the terrors of the damn'd; his deſcriptions of the glory of the righteous, we ſhould find our hearts form'd and diſpos'd to *hunger and thirſt after righteouſneſs*. Happy they, who ſaw the Son of God upon earth converting ſinners, and calling *fallen*

ſpirits

ſpirits to return to God! And next happy are we, who have his diſcourſes, doctrines, actions, and miracles, which then converted *Jews* and heathens into *ſaints and martyrs*, ſtill preſerved to fill us with the ſame heavenly light, and lead us to the ſame ſtate of glory!

CHAP. XIII.

WHOEVER hath read the foregoing chapters with attention, is, I hope, ſufficiently inſtructed in the knowledge of *Chriſtian Perfection*. He hath ſeen, that it requireth us to *devote* ourſelves *wholly* unto God, to make the ends and deſigns of religion, the ends and deſigns of all our actions; that it calleth us to be *born again of God*, to live by the light of his Holy Spirit, to *renounce the world* and all *worldly tempers*, to practiſe a conſtant *univerſal ſelf-denial*, to make daily war with the corruption and diſorder of our nature, to prepare ourſelves for *divine grace* by a purity and holineſs of converſation, to avoid all pleaſures and cares which *grieve the Holy Spirit* and ſeparate him from us, to live in a *daily, conſtant ſtate* of prayer and devotion, and as the crown of all to imitate the *Life and Spirit* of the Son of God.

It now only remains, that I exhort the reader to labour after this Chriſtian perfection. Was I to exhort any one to the ſtudy of *poetry* or *eloquence*, to labour to be *rich* and *great*, or to ſpend his time in *mathematicks*, or other learning, I could only produce ſuch reaſons as are fit to delude the vanity of men, who are ready to be taken with any appearance of excellence. For if the ſame perſon was to aſk me, what it ſignifies to be a *poet* or *eloquent*, what advantage it would be to him, to be a great *mathematician*, or a great *ſtateſman*, I muſt be forced to anſwer, that theſe things would ſignify juſt as much to him, as they now ſignify to thoſe poets, orators, mathematicians, and ſtateſmen, whoſe bodies have been a long while loſt among common duſt. For if a man will be ſo thoughtful and inquiſitive, as to put the queſtion to every human enjoyment, and aſk what real good it would bring along with it, he would ſoon find, that every ſucceſs amongſt

the things of this life, leaves us juſt in the ſame ſtate of want and emptineſs in which it found us. If a man aſks why he ſhould labour to be the firſt *mathematician*, *orator*, or *ſtateſman*, the anſwer is eaſily given, becauſe of the *fame* and *honour* of ſuch a diſtinction; but if he was to aſk again, why he ſhould thirſt after fame and honour, or what good they would do him, he muſt ſtay long enough for an anſwer. For when we are at the *top* of all human attainments, we are ſtill at the *bottom* of all human miſery, and have made no farther advancement towards true happineſs, than thoſe, whom we ſee in the want of all theſe excellencies. Whether a man die before he has writ *poems*, compiled *hiſtories*, or raiſed an *eſtate*, ſignifies no more, than whether he died an hundred, or a thouſand years ago.

On the contrary, when any one is exhorted to labour after Chriſtian Perfection, if he then aſks what good it will do him, the anſwer is ready, that it would do him a good, which eternity only can meaſure; that it will deliver him from a ſtate of vanity and miſery; that it will raiſe him from the poor enjoyments of an animal life; that it will give him a glorious body, carry him in ſpite of death and the grave to live with God, be glorious among angels and heavenly beings, and be full of an infinite happineſs to all eternity. If therefore we could but make men ſo reaſonable, as to make the ſhorteſt enquiry into the nature of things, we ſhould have no occaſion to exhort them to ſtrive after Chriſtian Perfection. *Two queſtions*, we ſee, put an end to all the vain projects and deſigns of human life; they are all ſo empty and uſeleſs to our happineſs, that they cannot ſtand the trial of a *ſecond* queſtion. And on the other hand, 'tis but aſking, whether Chriſtian Perfection tends to make us have no other care. One ſingle thought upon the eternal happineſs that it leads to, is ſufficient to make people *ſaints*.

This ſhews us, how inexcuſable all Chriſtians are, who are devoted to the things of this life; it is not becauſe they want *fine parts*, or are unable to make *deep reflections*; but it is becauſe they reject the firſt principle of *common ſenſe*; they won't ſo much as aſk, what thoſe things are, which they are labouring after.

Did

Did they uſe thus much reaſon, we need not deſire them to be wiſer, in order to ſeek only eternal happineſs. As a ſhadow at the firſt trial of the hand appears to have no ſubſtance; ſo all human enjoyments ſink away into nothing, at the firſt approach of a *ſerious* thought. We muſt not therefore complain of the weakneſs and ignorance of our nature, or the deceitful appearances of worldly enjoyments, becauſe the loweſt degree of reaſon, if liſtened to, is ſufficient to diſcover the cheat. If you will, you may *blindly* do what the reſt of the world are doing, you may follow the *cry*, and run yourſelf out of *breath* for you know not what. But if you will but ſhew ſo much ſenſe, as to aſk why you ſhould take ſuch a chaſe, you will need no deeper a reflection than this to make you leave the broad-way, and let the wiſe and learned, the rich and great, be mad by themſelves. Thus much common ſenſe will turn your eyes towards God, will ſeparate you from all the appearances of worldly felicity, and fill you with one only ambition after eternal happineſs.

When *Pyrrhus*, king of *Epirus*, told *Cineas* what great conqueſts he intended to make, and how many nations he would ſubdue; *Cineas* aſked him, what he would do when all this was done? He anſwered, we will then live at eaſe, and enjoy ourſelves and our friends. *Cineas* reply'd to this purpoſe, Why then, Sir, do we not *now* live at eaſe, and enjoy ourſelves? If eaſe and quiet be the utmoſt of our views and deſigns, why do we run away from it at preſent? What occaſion for all theſe battles and expeditions all over the world?

The *moral* of this ſtory is very extenſive, and carries a leſſon of inſtruction to much the greateſt part of the Chriſtian world.

When a Chriſtian is eager after the diſtinctions of this life, propoſing ſome mighty heights to which he will raiſe himſelf, either in *riches*, *learning*, or *power*; if one was to aſk him what he will do when he has obtained them, I ſuppoſe his anſwer would be, that he would then retire, and devote himſelf to *holineſs and piety*. May we not here juſtly ſay with *Cineas*, if piety

and holineſs are the chief *end* of man, if theſe are your laſt propoſal, the upſhot of all your labours, Why do you not enter upon happineſs at preſent? Why all this wandring out of your way? Why muſt you go ſo far about? For to devote yourſelf to the world, tho' it is your laſt propoſal to retire from it to holineſs and piety is like *Pyrrhus*'s ſeeking of *battles*, when he propoſed to live in eaſe and pleaſure with his friends. I believe there are very few Chriſtians, who have it not in their heads at leaſt, to be ſome time or other holy and virtuous, and readily own, that he is the happy man that dies truly humble, holy, and heavenly-minded. Now this opinion, which all people are poſſeſſed of, makes the projects and deſigns of life more mad and frantick than the battles of *Pyrrhus*. For one may not only ſay to ſuch people, why do you neglect the *preſent* happineſs of theſe virtues; but one muſt farther add, why are you engaged in ways of life, that are quite contrary to them? You want to be *rich* and *great*; is it that riches and greatneſs may make you more *meek* and *humble*, and *heavenly-minded?* Do you aſpire after the diſtinctions of honour, that you may more truly feel the *miſery* and *meanneſs* of your nature, and be made more lowly in your own eyes? Do you plunge yourſelf into worldly cares, let your paſſions fix upon variety of objects, that you may love God with all your heart, and raiſe your affections to things above? You acknowledge humility to be eſſential to ſalvation, yet make it the chief care of your life to run away from it, to raiſe yourſelf in the *ſhew* and *figure* of the world. Is not this fighting of *Pyrrhus*'s battles? Nay, is it not a much more egregious folly? for you own, that you connot be ſaved without true humility, a real lowlineſs of temper, and yet are doing all that you can to keep it out of your heart. What is there in the conduct of the maddeſt hero, that can equal this folly?

Suppoſe, that *ſtrict ſobriety* was the ſole end of man, the neceſſary condition of happineſs; what would you think of thoſe people, who, knowing and believing this to be true, ſhould yet ſpend their time in getting quantities of all ſorts of the *ſtrongeſt liquors?* What would

would you think if you ſaw them conſtantly enlarging their *cellars*, filling every room with *drams*, and contending who ſhould have the *largeſt quantities* of the ſtrongeſt liquors? Now this is the folly and madneſs of the lives of Chriſtians; they are as wiſe and reaſonable, as they are who are always providing ſtrong liquors, in order to be *ſtrictly ſober*. For all the enjoyments of human life, which Chriſtians ſo aſpire after, whether of *riches*, *greatneſs*, *honours*, and *pleaſures*, are as much the dangers and temptations of a Chriſtian, as ſtrong and pleaſant liquors are the danger and temptations of a man that is to drink only water. Now if you was to aſk ſuch a man, why he is continually increaſing his ſtock of liquors, when he is to abſtain from them all, and only to drink water; he can give you as good a reaſon, as thoſe Chriſtians, who ſpare no pains to acquire riches, greatneſs, and pleaſures, at the ſame time that their ſalvation depends upon their renouncing them, upon their heavenly-mindedneſs, great humility, and conſtant ſelf-denial.

But it may be, you are not devoted to theſe things; you have a greater ſoul, than to be taken with *riches*, *equipage* or the *pageantry* of ſtate; you are deeply engaged in *learning* and *ſciences*.

You are, it may be, ſquaring the *circle*, or ſettling the diſtances of the *ſtars*, or buſy in the ſtudy of *exotick plants*.

You, it may be, are comparing the ancient languages, have made deep diſcoveries in the *change of letters*, and perhaps know how to write an *inſcription* in as obſcure characters, as if you had lived above two thouſand years ago. Or, perhaps, you are meditating upon the *heathen theology*, collecting the hiſtory of their *gods* and *goddeſſes*; or you are ſcanning ſome ancient *Greek* or *Roman* poet, and making an exact collection of their *ſcattered* remains, *ſcraps* of ſentences, and *broken* words.

You are not expoſing your life in the field like a mad *Alexander* or *Cæſar*; but you are again and again fighting over all their battles, in your *ſtudy*; you are collecting the names of their *generals*, the number of

their *troops*, the manner of their arms, and can give the world a more exact account of the times, places, and circumſtances of their battles, than has yet been ſeen.

You will perhaps aſk, whether this be not a very commendable enquiry? an excellent uſe of our time and parts? whether people may not be very reaſonably exhorted to theſe kinds of ſtudies? It may be anſwered, that all enquiries (however learned they are reckoned) which do not improve the mind in ſome uſeful knowledge, that do not make us wiſe in *religious wiſdom*, (if they engroſs us) are to be reckoned amongſt our greateſt vanities and follies. All ſpeculations that will not ſtand this trial, are to be looked upon as the wanderings and impertinences of a *diſordered underſtanding*.

It is ſtrange want of thought to imagine, that an enquiry is ever the better, becauſe it is taken up in *Greek* and *Latin*. Why is it not as wiſe and reaſonable for a *ſcholar* to dwell in the *kitchen* and converſe with *cooks*, as to go into his ſtudy, to meditate upon the *Roman* art of *cookery*, and learn their variety of *ſauces*.

A grave *doctor* in divinity would perhaps think his time very ill employed, that he was acting below his character, if he was to be an *amanuenſis* to ſome *modern poet*. Why then does he think it ſuitable with the weight of his calling, to have been a *drudge* to ſome *ancient poet*, counting his ſyllables for ſeveral years, only to help the world to read, what ſome *irreligious*, *wanton*, or *Epicurean* poet has wrote.

It is certainly a much more reaſonable employment to be making *cloaths*, than to ſpend one's time in reading, or writing volumes upon the *Grecian* or *Roman* garments.

If you can ſhew me a learning that makes man truly ſenſible of his duty, that fills the mind with *true light*, that reforms the *heart*, that diſpoſes it right towards God, that makes us more *reaſonable* in all our actions, that inſpires us with *fortitude*, *humility*, *devotion*, and contempt of the *world*, that gives us right notions of the *greatneſs* of religion, the *ſanctity* of morality, the *littleneſs* of every thing but God, the *vanity* of our paſſions, and the *miſery* and corruption of our nature;

nature; I will own myſelf an advocate for ſuch learning. But to think that time is well employed, becauſe it is ſpent in ſuch ſpeculations, as the vulgar cannot reach, or becauſe they are fetched from *antiquity*, or found in *Greek* or *Latin*, is a folly that may be called as great as any in human life.

They, who think that theſe enquiries are conſiſtent with a heart *entirely devoted* to God, have not enough conſidered human nature; they would do well to conſult our Saviour's rebuke of *Martha*. She did not ſeem to have wandered far from her proper buſineſs; ſhe was not buſy in the hiſtory of *houſewifry*, or enquiring into the *original of the diſtaff*; ſhe was only taken up with her preſent affairs, and *cumbered about much ſerving*: but our bleſſed Saviour ſaid unto her, *Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things. But one thing is needful.*

Now if *ſcholars* and *divines* can ſhew, that they only apply to ſuch ſtudies as are ſerviceable to the *one thing needful*; if they are buſy in a philoſophy and learning that has a neceſſary connection with the devotion of the heart to God; ſuch learning becomes the followers of Chriſt. But, if they trifle in *Greek* and *Latin*, and only aſſiſt other people to follow them in the ſame impertinence, ſuch learning may be reckoned amongſt the corruptions of the age. For all the arguments againſt *pride*, *covetouſneſs*, and *vanity*, are as good arguments againſt *ſuch learning*; it being the ſame irreligion to be devoted to any falſe *learning*, as to be devoted to any other *falſe good*.

A Satisfaction in any vain ornaments of the body, whether of *cloaths* or *paint*, is no greater a miſtake, than a ſatisfaction in the *vain accompliſhments* of the mind.

A man, that is eager and laborious in the ſearch and ſtudy of that which does him *no good*, is the ſame poor, little ſoul, as the *miſer*, that is happy in his *bags*, that are laid by in duſt. A ridiculous application of our *money*, *time*, *and underſtanding*, is the ſame fault, whether it be found amongſt the finery of *fops*, the hoards of *miſers*, or the trinkets of *virtuoſo's*. It is the ſame falſe turn of mind, the ſame miſtake of the uſe of things,

the ſame ignorance of the ſtate of man, and the ſame offence againſt religion.

When we ſee a man brooding over *bags* of wealth, and labouring to die *rich*, we do not only accuſe him of a poor littleneſs of mind; but we charge him with great guilt, we do not allow ſuch a one to be in a ſtate of religion. Let us therefore ſuppoſe, that this covetous man was on a ſudden changed into another temper, that he was grown *polite* and *curious*, that he was fond and eager after the moſt uſeleſs things, if they were but *ancient* or *ſcarce*; let us ſuppoſe that he is now as greedy of *original paintings*, as he was before of *money*; that he will give more for a *dog's-head*, or a *ſnuff* of a candle by a good *hand*, than ever he gave in charity all his life; is he a wiſer man, or a better Chriſtian than he was before? has he more overcome the world, or is he more devoted to God, than when his ſoul was locked up with his money? Alas! his heart is engroſſed in the ſame falſe ſatisfaction, he is in the ſame ſtate of ignorance, is as far from the true good, as much ſeparated from God, as he whoſe ſoul is cleaving to the duſt; he lives in the ſame vanity, and muſt die in the ſame miſery, as he that lives and dies in *foppery* or *covetouſneſs*.

Here therefore I place my firſt argument for *Chriſtian Perfection*; I exhort thee to labour after it, becauſe there is no choice of any thing elſe for thee to labour after, there is nothing elſe that the reaſon of man can exhort thee to. The whole world has nothing to offer thee in its ſtead, chuſe what other way thou wilt, thou haſt choſen nothing but vanity and miſery; for all the different ways of the world, are only different ways of deluding thyſelf; this only excels that, as one vanity can excel another. If thou wilt make thyſelf more happy than thoſe who purſue their own deſtruction, if thou wilt ſhew thyſelf wiſer than *fops*, more reaſonable than *ſordid miſers*, thou muſt purſue that happineſs, and ſtudy that wiſdom which leads to God; for every other purſuit, every other way of life, however *polite* or *plauſible* in the opinions of the world, has a folly and ſtupidity in it, that is equal to the folly and ſtupidity of *fops* and *miſers*.

For a while ſhut thine eyes, and think of the *ſilliеſt creature*

creature in human life; imagine to thyſelf ſomething that thou thinkeſt the moſt *poor* and *vain* in the way of the world. Now thou art thyſelf that poor and vain creature, unleſs thou art devoted to God, and labouring after Chriſtian perfection: unleſs this be thy difference from the world, thou canſt not think of any creature more ſilly than thyſelf. For it is not any *poſt*, or *condition*, or *figure* in life, that makes one man wiſer or better than another; if thou art a proud *ſcholar*, a worldly *prieſt*, an indevout *philoſopher*, a crafty *politician*, an ambitious *ſtateſman*, thy imagination cannot invent a way of life, that has more of vanity, or folly than thine own.

Every one has wiſdom enough to ſee, what variety of fools and madmen there are in the world.

Now perhaps we cannot do better, than to find out the true reaſon of the folly and madneſs of any ſort of life. Aſk thy ſelf therefore wherein conſiſts the folly of any ſort of life, which is moſt condemned in thy judgment.

Is a drunken *foxhunter* leading a fooliſh life? Wherein conſiſts the folly of it? Is it becauſe he is not getting money upon the *Exchange?* or becauſe he is not wrangling at the *bar?* or not waiting at *court?* No, the folly of it conſiſts in this, that he is not living like a *reaſonable Chriſtian*; that he is not acting like a being, that is *born again* of God, that has a ſalvation to work out with *fear and trembling*; that he is throwing away his time amongſt *dogs*, and noiſe, and intemperance, which he ſhould devote to watching and prayer, and the improvement of his ſoul in all holy tempers. Now, if this is the folly (as it moſt certainly is) of any intemperate *fox-hunter*, it ſhews us an equal folly in every other way of life, where the ſame great ends of living are neglected. Though we are ſhining at the *bar*, making a figure at *court*, great at the *Exchange*, or famous in the *ſchools* of philoſophy, we are yet the ſame deſpicable creatures, as the intemperate *fox-hunter*, if theſe ſtates of life keep us as far from the improvements of holineſs and heavenly affections. There is nothing greater in any way of life than *fox-hunting*, it is all the ſame folly, unleſs religion be the beginning and ending, the rule and meaſure of it all.

For

For it is as *noble* a *wiſdom*, and ſhews as *great a ſoul*, to die leſs holy and heavenly for the ſake of *hunting* and *noiſe*, as for the ſake of any thing that the world can give us.

If we will judge and condemn things by our tempers and fancies, we may think ſome ways of life mighty wiſe, and others mighty fooliſh; we may think it glorious to be purſuing methods of *fame* and *wealth*, and fooliſh to be killing *foxes*; but if we will let reaſon and religion ſhew us the folly and wiſdom of things, we ſhall eaſily ſee, that all ways of life are *equally* little and fooliſh, but thoſe that perfect and exalt our ſouls in holineſs.

No one therefore can complain of want of underſtanding in the conduct of his life, for a ſmall ſhare of ſenſe is ſufficient to condemn *ſome degrees of* vanity, which we ſee in the world; every one is able and ready to do it. And if we are but able to condemn the vaineſt ſort of life upon *true reaſons*, the ſame reaſons will ſerve to ſhew, that all ſorts of life are equally vain, but the *one life* of religion. Thou haſt therefore, as I obſerved before, no choice of any thing to labour after inſtead of Chriſtian Perfection: if thou canſt be content to be the *pooreſt*, *vaineſt*, *miſerableſt* thing upon earth, thou may'ſt neglect Chriſtian Perfection. But if thou ſeeſt any thing in human life that thou *abhorreſt* and *deſpiſeſt*; if there be any perſon that lives ſo, as thou ſhouldſt *fear* to live, thou muſt turn thy heart to God, thou muſt labour after *Chriſtian Perfection*; for there is nothing in nature but this, that can ſet thee above the *vaineſt*, *pooreſt*, and moſt *miſerable* of human creatures. Thou art every thing that thou canſt abhor and deſpiſe, every thing that thou canſt fear, thou art full of every folly that thy mind can imagine, unleſs thou art devoted to God.

Secondly, another argument for *Chriſtian Perfection* ſhall be taken from the neceſſity of it.

I have all along ſhewn, that Chriſtian Perfection conſiſts in the right performance of our *neceſſary duties*; that it implies ſuch holy tempers, as conſtitute that common piety, which is neceſſary to ſalvation; and conſequently it is ſuch a piety as is equally neceſſary to

to be attained by all people. But beſides this, we are to conſider, that God only knows what *abatements* of holineſs he will accept; and therefore we can have no ſecurity of our ſalvation, but by doing our utmoſt to deſerve it.

There are different degrees of holineſs, which it may pleaſe God to reward; but we cannot ſtate theſe different degrees ourſelves; but muſt all labour to be as eminent as we can, and then our different improvements muſt be left to God. We have nothing to truſt to, but the ſincerity of our endeavours, and our endeavours may well be thought to want ſincerity, unleſs they are endeavours after the utmoſt perfection. As ſoon as we ſtop at any degrees of goodneſs, we put an end to our goodneſs, which is only valuable by having all the degrees that we can add to it. Our higheſt improvement, is a ſtate of great imperfection, but will be accepted by God, becauſe it is our higheſt improvement. But any other ſtate of life, where we are not doing all that we can to purify and perfect our ſouls, is a ſtate that can give us no comfort or ſatisfaction; becauſe ſo far as we are wanting in any ways of piety, that are in our power; ſo far as we are defective in any holy tempers, of which we are capable; ſo far we make our very ſalvation uncertain. For no one can have any aſſurance that he pleaſes God, or puts himſelf within the terms of Chriſtian ſalvation; but he who ſerves God with his whole heart, and with the utmoſt of his ſtrength. For tho' the Chriſtian religion be a covenant of mercy, for the pardon and ſalvation of *frail* and *imperfect* creatures; yet we cannot ſay, that we are within the conditions of that mercy, till we do all we can in our frail and imperfect ſtate. So that tho' we are not called to ſuch a perfection, as implies a *ſinleſs ſtate*, tho' our imperfections will not prevent the divine mercy; yet it cannot be proved, that God has any terms of favour for thoſe, who do not labour to be as perfect as they can be.

Different attainments in piety will carry different perſons to heaven; yet none of us can have any ſatisfaction that we are going thither, but by arriving at all that change of nature, which is in our power. It is as neceſſary therefore to labour after perfection, as

to

to labour after our ſalvation; becauſe we have no ſatisfaction that a failure in one will not deprive us of the other. When therefore you are exhorted to Chriſtian Perfection, you muſt remember, that you are only exhorted to ſecure your ſalvation; you muſt remember alſo, that you have no other rule to judge of your perfection, but by the ſincerity and *fulneſs* of your endeavours to arrive at it.

We may judge of the meaſure and extent of *Chriſtian holineſs*, from the one inſtance of *charity*. This virtue is thus deſcribed, *Charity ſeeketh not her own, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.* Now this charity, tho' it be in perfection, is yet by the apoſtle made ſo abſolutely neceſſary to ſalvation, that a failure in it, is not to be ſupplied by any other the moſt ſhining virtues. *Tho' I have all faith, ſo that I could remove mountains; tho' I beſtow all my goods to feed the poor; tho' I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.* The apoſtle expreſly teaches us, that this perfection in Chriſtian charity, is ſo neceſſary to ſalvation, that even *martyrdom* itſelf is not ſufficient to atone for the want of it. Need we now any other argument to convince us, that to labour after our perfection, is only to labour after our ſalvation? For what is here ſaid of charity, muſt in all reaſon be underſtood of every other virtue, it muſt be practiſed in the ſame fulneſs and ſincerity of heart as this charity. It may alſo juſtly be affirmed, that this charity is ſo holy a temper, and requires ſo many other virtues as the foundation of it, that it can only be exerciſed by a heart that is far advanced in holineſs, that is entirely devoted to God. Our whole nature muſt be changed, we muſt have put off the *old man*, we muſt be *born again* of God, we muſt have *overcome the world*, we muſt live *by faith*, be full of the Spirit of Chriſt, in order to exerciſe this charity.

When therefore you would know, whether it be neceſſary to labour after Chriſtian Perfection, and live wholly unto God, read over St. *Paul*'s deſcription of *charity*; if you can think of any *negligence* of life, any *defects* of humility, any *abatements* of devotion, any *fondneſs* of the world, any deſires of *riches* and *greatneſs*,

neſs, that is conſiſtent with the *tempers* there deſcribed; then you may be content with them; but if theſe tempers of an exalted charity cannot ſubſiſt, but in a ſoul that is devoted to God and reſigned to the world, that is humble and mortified, that is full of the Spirit of Chriſt and the cares of eternity; then you have a plain reaſon of the neceſſity of labouring after all the perfection that you are capable of: for the apoſtle expreſly ſaith, that without theſe tempers, the very tongues of *angels* are but as *ſounding braſs, or a tinkling cymbal.* Do not therefore imagine, that it only belongs to people of a *particular piety and turn of mind*, to labour after their perfection, and that you may go to heaven with much leſs care; there is only one *ſtreight gate*, and one *narrow way that leadeth unto life*, and there is no admiſſion; but for thoſe who *ſtrive* to enter into it. If you art not *ſtriving*, you neglect the expreſs condition which our Lord requires, and it is flat nonſenſe to think that you *ſtrive*, if you do not uſe all your ſtrength. The apoſtle repreſents a Chriſtian's ſtriving for eternal life in this manner, *Know ye not, that they which run in a race, run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.* So that, according to the apoſtle, he only is in the *road* to ſalvation, who is ſo contending for it, as he that is running in a *race. Farther*; you can have no ſatisfaction that you are ſincere in any one virtue, unleſs you are endeavouring to be perfect in all the inſtances of it. If you allow yourſelf in any defects of charity, you have no reaſon to think yourſelf ſincere in any acts of charity. If you indulge yourſelf in any inſtances of pride, you render all your acts of humility juſtly ſuſpected, becauſe there can be no *true reaſon* for charity, but what is as good a reaſon for *all inſtances* of charity; nor any religious motive for humility, but what is as ſtrong a motive for all degrees of humility. So that he, who allows himſelf in any known defects of charity, humility, or any other virtue, cannot be ſuppoſed to practiſe any inſtances of that virtue upon true reaſons of religion. For if it was a right fear of God, a true deſire of being like Chriſt, a hearty love of my fellow-creatures that made me give *alms*, the ſame diſpoſitions would make me

love

love and forgive all my enemies, and deny myſelf all kinds of *revenge*, and *ſpight*, and *evil-ſpeaking*.

So that if I allow myſelf in known inſtances of uncharitableneſs, I have as much reaſon to ſuppoſe myſelf void of true charity, as if I allowed myſelf in a refuſal of *ſuch alms* as I am able to give; becauſe every inſtance of uncharitableneſs, is the ſame ſin againſt all the reaſons of charity, as the allowed refuſal of *alms*. For the refuſal of *alms* is only a great ſin; becauſe it ſhews, that we have not a right fear of God, that we have not a hearty deſire of being like Chriſt, that we want a *true love* of our fellow-creature. Now, as every allowed inſtance of uncharitableneſs ſhews a want of all theſe tempers; ſo it ſhews, that every ſuch inſtance is the ſame ſin, and ſets us as far from God, as the refuſal of *alms*.

To forbear from *ſpight and evil-ſpeaking*, is a proper inſtance of Chriſtian charity; but yet it is ſuch a charity as will not profit thoſe, who are not charitable in *alms*, becauſe by refuſing *alms*, they ſin againſt as many reaſons of charity, as he that lives in *ſpight and evil-ſpeaking*. And on the other hand, he that allows himſelf in *ſpight and evil-ſpeaking*, ſins againſt all the ſame reaſons of charity, as he that lives in the refuſal of *alms*. This is a doctrine that cannot be too much reflected upon by all thoſe who would practiſe a piety that is pleaſing to God.

Too many Chriſtians look at *ſome inſtances* of virtue which they practiſe, as a ſufficient atonement for their known defects in ſome other parts of the ſame virtue. Not conſidering, that this is as abſurd, as to think to make ſome apparent acts of *juſtice* compound for other allowed inſtances of *fraud*.

A lady is perhaps ſatisfied with her humility, becauſe ſhe can look at ſome apparent inſtances of it; ſhe ſometimes viſits *hoſpitals and alms-houſes*, and is very familiar and condeſcending to the poor: now theſe are very good things; but then it may be, that theſe very things are look'd upon as ſufficient proofs of humility; ſhe *patches and paints*, and delights in all the ſhew and ornaments of *perſonal pride*, and is very eaſy with herſelf becauſe ſhe viſits the *hoſpitals*. Now ſhe ſhould con-

conſider, that ſhe places her humility in that which is but a part, and alſo the ſmalleſt and moſt deceitful part of it. For the hardeſt, the greateſt, and moſt eſſential part of humility, is to have low opinions of ourſelves, and to renounce all ſuch things as gratify the pride and vanity of our nature. Humility alſo is much better diſcovered by our behaviour towards our *equals and ſuperiors*, than towards thoſe who are ſo much below us. It does no hurt to a *proud* heart, to ſtoop to ſome low offices to the meaneſt people. Nay, there is ſomething in it that may gratify *pride*; for perhaps our own greatneſs is never ſeen to more advantage, than when we ſtoop to thoſe who are ſo far below us. The lower the people are to whom we ſtoop, the better they ſhew the height of our own ſtate. So that there is nothing difficult in theſe condeſcenſions, they are no *contradictions* to pride.

The trueſt trial of humility is our behaviour towards our *equals*, and thoſe that are our ſuperiors or inferiors but in a *ſmall degree*. It is no ſign of humility, for a private gentleman to pay a profound reverence, and ſhew great ſubmiſſion to a *king*; nor is it any ſign of humility for the ſame perſon to condeſcend to a great familiarity with a *poor almſman*. For he may act upon the ſame principle in both caſes.

It does not hurt him to ſhew *great* ſubmiſſion to a *king*, becauſe he has no thoughts of being *equal* to a *king*; and for the ſame reaſon, it does not hurt him to condeſcend to poor people, becauſe he never imagines, that they will think themſelves *equal* to him. So that it is the great inequality of condition, that makes it as eaſy for people to condeſcend to thoſe who are a great way below them, as to be ſubmiſſive and yielding to thoſe who are vaſtly above them.

From this it appears, that our moſt ſplendid acts of virtue, which we think to be ſufficient to atone for our other known defects, may themſelves be ſo vain and defective, as to have no worth in them. This alſo ſhews us the abſolute neceſſity of labouring after *all inſtances* of Perfection in every virtue, becauſe if we pick and chuſe what parts of any virtue we will perform, we ſin againſt all the ſame reaſons, as if we neglected all parts of

of it: If we chuſe to *give* inſtead of *forgiving*, we chuſe ſomething elſe inſtead of *charity*.

Thirdly, Another motive to induce you to aſpire after *Chriſtian Perfection*, may be taken from the double advantage of it in this life, and that which is to come.

The apoſtle thus exhorts the *Corinthians*, wherefore, *my beloved brethren, be ye ſtedfaſt, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; foraſmuch as ye know, that our labour will not be in vain in the Lord.* (*a*) This is an exhortation founded upon ſolid reaſon; for what can be ſo wiſe and reaſonable, as to be always abounding in *that work* which will never be *in vain?* Whilſt we are pleaſed with ourſelves, or pleaſed with the world, we are pleaſed with vanity, and our moſt proſperous labours of this kind are, as the *preacher* ſaith, *but vanity of vanities, and all is vanity.* But whilſt we are labouring after Chriſtian Perfection, we are labouring for eternity, and building to ourſelves higher ſtations in the joys of heaven. *As one ſtar differeth from another ſtar in glory, ſo alſo is the reſurrection of the dead:* we ſhall ſurely riſe to different degrees of glory, of joy and happineſs in God, according to our different advancements in purity, holineſs, and good works.

No degrees of mortification and ſelf-denial, no private prayers, no ſecret mournings, no inſtances of charity, no labour of love will ever be forgotten, but all treaſur'd up to our everlaſting comfort and refreſhment. For tho' the rewards of the other life, are free gifts of God; yet ſince he has aſſured us, that every man ſhall be rewarded according to his works, it is certain, that our rewards will be as different, as our works have been.

Now ſtand ſtill here a while, and aſk yourſelf, whether you really believe this to be true; that the more perfect we make ourſelves here, the more happy we ſhall be hereafter. If you do not believe this to be ſtrictly true, you know nothing of God and religion. And if you believe it to be true, is it poſſible to be *awake*, and not aſpiring after Chriſtian Perfection? What can you think of, what can the world ſhew you, that can make you any amends for the loſs of *any degree*

(*a*) 1 Cor. xv.

greet virtue? Can any way of life make it reaſonable for you to die *leſs perfect*, than you might have done?

If you would now devote yourſelf to Perfection, perhaps you muſt part with ſome friends, you muſt diſpleaſe ſome relations, you muſt lay aſide ſome deſigns, you muſt refrain from ſome pleaſures, you muſt alter your life; nay, perhaps you muſt do more than this, you muſt expoſe yourſelf to the hatred of your friends, to the jeſt and ridicule of *wits*, and to the ſcorn and deriſion of worldly men: but had you not better do and ſuffer all this, than to die *leſs perfect*, leſs prepared for manſions of eternal glory? But indeed, the ſuffering all this is ſuffering nothing. For why ſhould it ſignify any thing to you, what *fools* and *madmen* think of you? And ſurely it can be no wrong or raſh judgment, to think thoſe both fools and mad, who condemn what God approves, and like that which God condemns. But if you think this too much to be done, to obtain eternal glory; think on the other hand, what can be gained inſtead of it.

Fancy yourſelf living in all the eaſe and pleaſure that the world can give you, eſteemed by your friends, undiſturbed by your enemies, and gratifying all your *natural tempers*. If you could *ſtand ſtill* in ſuch a ſtate, you might ſay, that you had got *ſomething*; but alas! every day that is *added* to ſuch a life, is the ſame thing as a day taken from it, and ſhews you that ſo much happineſs is gone from you; for be as happy as you will, you muſt ſee it all ſinking away from you; you muſt feel yourſelf *decline*; you muſt ſee that your time *ſhortens apace*; you muſt hear of *ſudden deaths*; you muſt fear *ſickneſs*; you muſt both dread and deſire *old age*; you muſt fall into the hands of death; you muſt either die in the painful, bitter ſorrows of a deep repentance, or in ſad, gloomy deſpair, wiſhing for *mountains to fall upon you, and ſeas to cover you.* And is this a *happineſs* to be choſen? Is this all that you can gain by neglecting God, by following your own deſires, and not labouring after Chriſtian Perfection? Is it worth your while to ſeparate yourſelf from God, to loſe your ſhare in the realms of light, to be *thus happy*, or, I may better ſay, to be thus miſerable even in this

life?

life? You may be ſo blind and fooliſh, as not to think of theſe things; but it is impoſſible to think of them, without labouring after Chriſtian Perfection. It may be, you are too young, too happy, or too buſy to be affected with theſe reflections; but let me tell you, that *all* will be over before you are aware; your *day* will be ſpent, and leave you to ſuch a *night*, as that which ſurprized the *fooliſh virgins*. *And at midnight there was a great cry made, behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him.* (*a*)

The *laſt hour* will ſoon be with you, when you will have nothing to look for, but your *reward* in another life; when you will ſtand with nothing but *eternity* before you, and muſt begin to be *ſomething* that will be your ſtate for ever. I can no more *reach* heaven with my hands, than I can deſcribe the ſentiments that you will then have; you will then feel motions of heart that you never felt before; all your thoughts and reflections will pierce your ſoul in a manner, that you never before experienc'd; and you will feel the immortality of your nature, by the depth and piercing vigour of your thoughts. You will then know what it is to die; you will then know that you never knew it before, that you never thought worldly of it; but that dying thoughts are as *new* and *amazing*, as that ſtate which follows them.

Let me therefore exhort you, to come prepar'd to this time of trial; to look out for comfort, whilſt the day is before you; to treaſure up ſuch a *fund* of good and pious works, as may make you able to bear that ſtate, which cannot be born without them. Could I any way make you apprehend, how dying men feel the want of a pious life; how they lament time loſt, health and ſtrength ſquander'd away in folly; how they look at eternity, and what they think of the rewards of another life, you would ſoon find yourſelf one of thoſe, who deſire to live in the higheſt ſtate of piety and perfection, that by this means you may grow old in peace, and die in full hope of eternal glory.

Conſider again, that beſides the rewards of the other life, the labouring after Chriſtian Perfection, or devoting

(*a*) Matt. xxv. 6.

ting yourſelf wholly to God, has a great reward even in this life, as it makes religion *doubly* pleaſant to you. Whilſt you are divided betwixt God and the world, you have neither the pleaſures of religion, nor the pleaſures of the world; but are always in the uneaſineſs of a divided ſtate of heart. You have only ſo much religion as ſerves to diſquiet you; to check your enjoyments; to ſhew you a *hand-writing upon the wall*; to interrupt your pleaſures; to reproach you with your follies; and to appear as a *death's-head* at all your feaſts; but not religion enough, to give you a taſte and feeling of its proper pleaſures and ſatisfactions. You dare not wholly neglect religion; but then you take no more of it, than is juſt ſufficient to keep you from being a terror to yourſelf; and you are as loth to be *very good*, as you are fearful to be *very bad*. So that you are juſt as happy as the *ſlave*, that dares not run away from his maſter, and yet always ſerves him againſt his will. So that inſtead of having a religion that is your *comfort* in all troubles, your religion is itſelf a *trouble*, under which you want to be comforted? and thoſe days and times hang heavieſt upon your hands, which leave you only to the offices and duties of religion. *Sunday* would be very dull and tireſome, but that it is but one day in *ſeven*, and is made a day of *dreſſing* and *viſiting*, as well as of divine ſervice: you don't care to keep away from the publick worſhip, but are always glad when it is over. This is the ſtate of a *half piety*; thus they live who add religion to a worldly life; all their religion is mere *yoke* and *burden*, and is only made tolerable by having but little of their time.

Urbanus goes to church, but he hardly knows whether he goes out of a ſenſe of duty, or to meet his friends. He wonders at thoſe people who are *prophane*, and what pleaſure they can find in irreligion; but then he is in a great wonder at thoſe, who would make every day a day of divine worſhip; he feels no more of the pleaſures of piety, than of the pleaſures of prophaneneſs. As religion has every thing from him, but his *heart*, ſo he has every thing from religion, but its *comforts*. *Urbanus* likes religion, becauſe it ſeems an *eaſy* way of pleaſing God; a *decent* thing, that takes

up

up but little of our time, and is a proper *mixture* in life. But if he was reduced to take *comfort* in it, he would be as much at a loſs, as thoſe who have lived without God in the world. When *Urbanus* thinks of joy, and pleaſure, and happineſs, he does not think at all of religion. He has gone through a hundred miſfortunes, fallen into variety of hardſhips; but never thought of making religion his *comfort* in any of them; he makes himſelf quiet and happy in another manner. He is content with his Chriſtianity, not becauſe he is *pious*, but becauſe he is not *prophane*. He continues in the ſame courſe of religion, not becauſe of any real good he ever found in it, but becauſe it does him no hurt.

To ſuch poor purpoſes as theſe do numbers of people profeſs Chriſtianity. Let me therefore exhort you to a *ſolid piety*, to devote yourſelf wholly unto God, that entering deep into religion, you may enter deep into its comforts, that ſerving God with all your heart, you may have the peace and pleaſure of a heart that is at unity with itſelf. When your conſcience once bears you witneſs, that you are *ſtedfaſt, immoveable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord*, you will find that your reward is already begun, and that you could not be leſs devout, leſs holy, leſs charitable, or leſs humble, without leſſening the moſt ſubſtantial pleaſure that ever you felt in your life. So that to be content with any lower attainments in piety, is to rob ourſelves of a preſent happineſs which nothing elſe can give us.

You would perhaps devote yourſelf to perfection, but for this or that *little difficulty*, that lies in your way; you are not in ſo convenient a ſtate for the full practice of piety, as you could wiſh. But conſider that this is nonſenſe, becauſe perfection conſiſts in conquering difficulties. You could not be perfect, as the preſent ſtate of trial requires, had you not thoſe difficulties and inconveniences to ſtruggle with. Theſe things therefore which you would have removed, are laid in your way, that you may make them ſo many ſteps to perfection and glory.

As you could not exerciſe your charity, unleſs you met with objects; ſo neither could you ſhew, that you had

had *overcome* the world, unleſs you had many worldly engagements to overcome. If all your *friends* and *acquaintance* were devout, humble, heavenly-minded, and wholly intent upon the one end of life, it would be leſs perfection in you to be like them. But if you are *humble* amongſt thoſe that delight in pride, *heavenly-minded* amongſt the worldly, *ſober* amongſt the intemperate, *devout* amongſt the irreligious, and labouring after *perfection*, amongſt thoſe that deſpiſe and ridicule your labours; then are you truly devoted unto God. Conſider therefore, that you can have no difficulty, but ſuch as the world lays in your way, and that perfection is never to be had, but by parting with the world. It conſiſts in nothing elſe. To ſtay therefore to be perfect, till it ſuits with your condition in the world, is like ſtaying to be charitable, till there were no objects of charity. It is as if a man ſhould intend to be courageous ſome time or other, when there is nothing left to try his courage.

Again; you perhaps turn your eyes upon the world; you ſee all orders of people full of other cares and pleaſures; you ſee the generality of *clergy* and *laity*, learned and unlearned, your friends and acquaintance, moſtly living according to the ſpirit that reigneth in the world; you are perhaps content with ſuch a *piety*, as you think contents great *ſcholars*, and *famous* men; and, it may be, you cannot think that God rejects ſuch numbers of Chriſtians. Now all this is amuſing yourſelf with nothing; it is only loſing yourſelf in vain imaginations; it is making that a *rule*, which is no rule, and cheating yourſelf into a falſe ſatisfaction. As you are not cenſoriouſly to damn other people; ſo neither are you to think your own ſalvation ſecure, becauſe you are like the generality of the world.

The *fooliſh virgins*, that had provided no oil for their lamps, and ſo were ſhut out of the marriage-feaſt, were only thus far fooliſh, that they truſted to the *aſſiſtance* of thoſe that were *wiſe*. But you are more *fooliſh* than they; for you truſt to be ſaved by the *folly* of others; you imagine yourſelf ſafe in the *negligence*, *vanity*, and *irregularity* of the world. You take confidence in the *broad way*, becauſe it is *broad*; you are content with yourſelf, becauſe

cauſe you ſeem to go along with *the many*, though God himſelf has told you, that *narrow* is the way that leadeth unto life, and *few* there be that find it.

Laſtly, One word more and I have done; think with yourſelf, what a happineſs it is, that you have it in your power to ſecure a ſhare in the glories of heaven, and make yourſelf one of thoſe bleſſed beings that are to live with God for ever. Reflect upon the glories of bright angels, that ſhine about the throne of heaven; think upon that fulneſs of joy, which is the ſtate of Chriſt at the right hand of God; and remember, that it is this ſame ſtate of glory and joy that lies open for you. You are leſs, it may be, in the worldly diſtinctions than many others; but as to your relation to God, you have no ſuperior upon earth. Let your condition be what it will, let your life be ever ſo mean, you may make the end of it the beginning of eternal glory. Be often therefore in theſe reflections, that they may fill you with a wiſe ambition of all that glory, which God in Chriſt hath called you to. For it is impoſſible to underſtand and feel any thing of this, without feeling your heart affected with ſtrong deſires after it. The hopes and expectations of ſo much greatneſs and glory, muſt needs awake you into earneſt deſires and longings after it. There are many things in human life which it would be in vain for you to aſpire after; but the happineſs of the next, which is the ſum of all happineſs, is ſecure and ſafe to you againſt all accidents. Here no chances or misfortunes can prevent your ſucceſs; neither the treachery of friends, nor the malice of enemies, can diſappoint you; it is only your own falſe heart that can rob you of this happineſs. Be but your own true friend, and then you have nothing to fear from your enemies. Do but you ſincerely labour in the Lord, and then neither height nor depth, neither life nor death, neither men nor devils, can make your labour in vain.

F I N I S.